

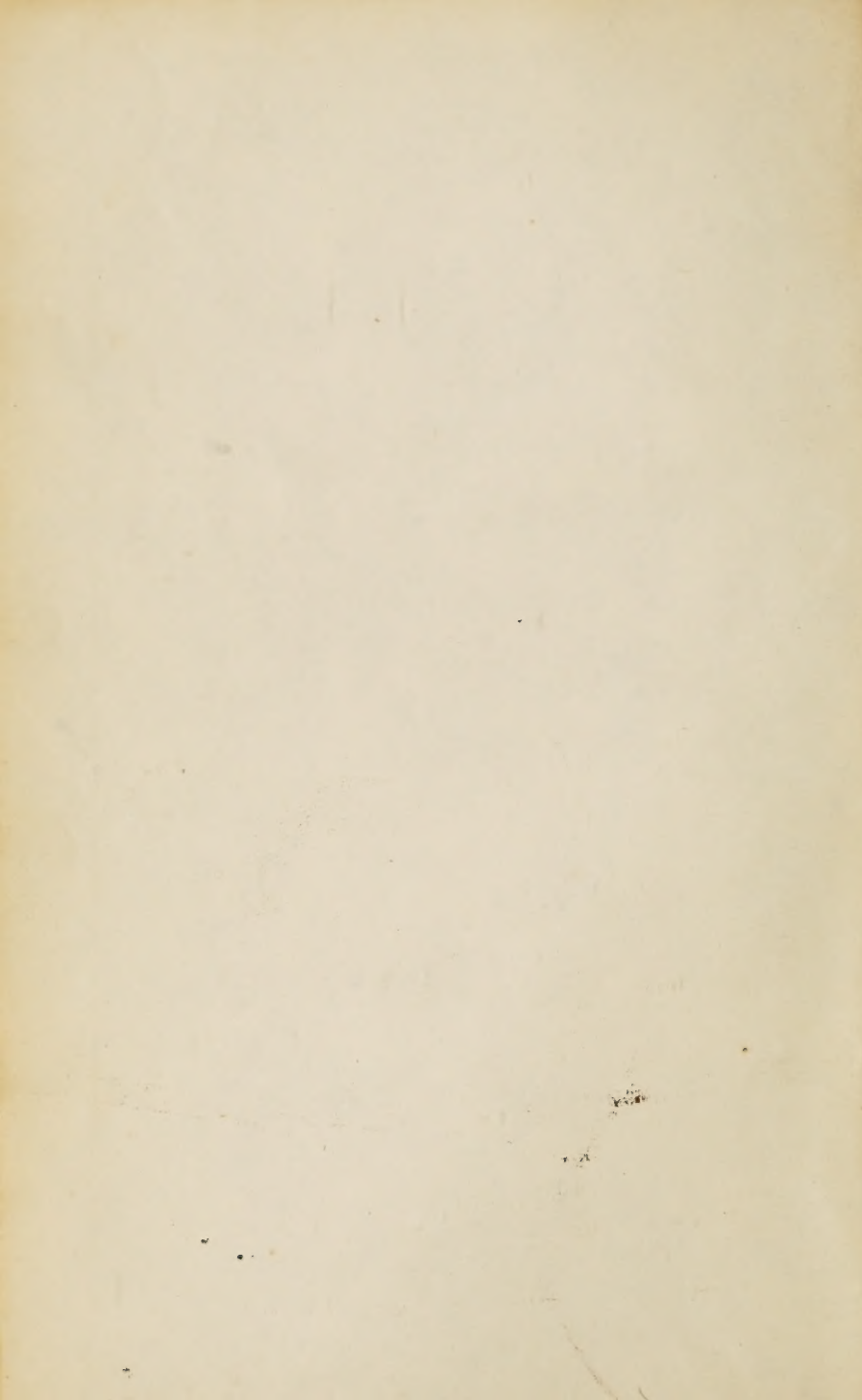
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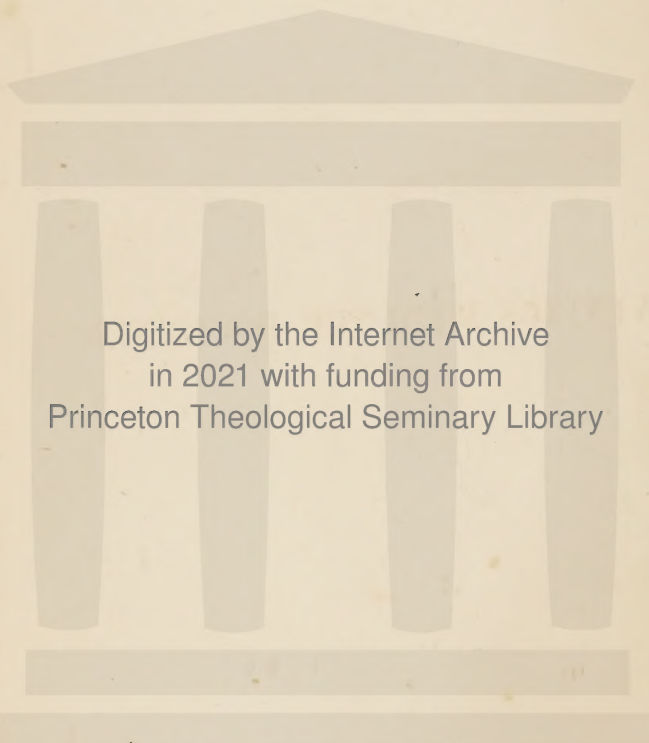
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Evenings with the doctrines

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EVENINGS WITH THE DOCTRINES.

EVENINGS

WITH

THE DOCTRINES.

BY

NEHEMIAH ADAMS, D. D.

AUTHOR OF "FRIENDS OF CHRIST," "CHRIST A FRIEND," "COMMUNION
SABBATH," ETC., ETC.

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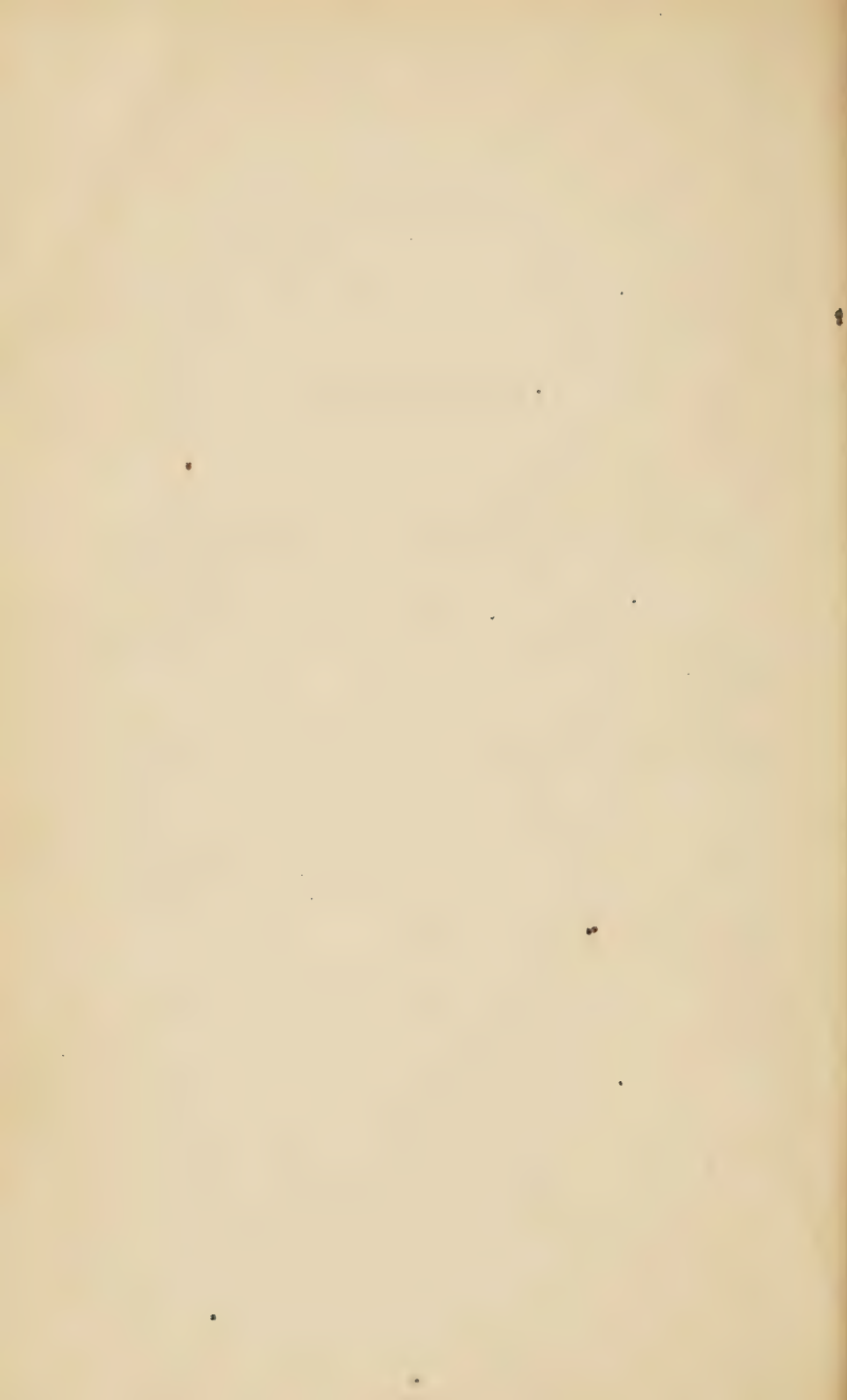
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INTRODUCTORY NOTE.

THESE pages contain the substance of familiar lectures delivered in the Lecture Room of the Essex Street Church, Boston, on successive Tuesday evenings in the winter of 1858-9.

The title, "EVENINGS WITH THE DOCTRINES," agrees, therefore, with the origin of this work, and is intended, also, to express the familiar mode of treating these subjects which was aimed at in their delivery, and is sought to be preserved in their present form.



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I.

G O D.

relies upon it as the chief source of evidence. The argument from design in creation is regarded as so conclusive with respect to the existence of God, that the reason assigned for "the wrath of God against all ungodliness of men," is, "Because *that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath showed it unto them.*" Then follows an explicit declaration that the "eternal power and Godhead," or "the invisible things of" God, "are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made," and therefore that idolatry, atheism, irreligion are "without excuse."

We sometimes read, in books of moral philosophy, that there is something independent of God which is called *the nature of things*; and that is represented as the foundation of virtue. For example, it is said that things are right and wrong in themselves, not merely because God has so ordained, and that these things would be right and wrong if there were no God. Hence, the impression is made that there is a constitution of nature to which God was obliged to conform himself, some eternal laws which were in existence and in operation contemporaneously with God, not created by Him, but having an existence of necessity; so that they would have existed even if there were no God. Here we have the foundation of Atheism, Pantheism, and of all those theories and dreamy notions whose object is to remove the idea of a personal God, or, by exciting a belief in something which is eternal besides God, to abate the power which the thought of God naturally has upon the mind.

But what is *the nature of things*, when things themselves do not exist? If God existed before all things, of course there were no laws antecedent to Him. Laws are the rules and orders by which things act. It is delusive, therefore, to think of any thing as existing independently of the Great First Cause. He existing from eternity, these laws and this nature of things exist contemporaneously with Him, but not independently of Him. Now we can make impossible hypotheses, but they are absurd, and then ask questions in view of them which are useless; as, for example: Suppose that God should cease to be; would not right and wrong be the same as now? Right and wrong have gained an existence because there is a God; they are eternal with Him; but they were not before Him; He necessitated them, not they Him, nor any of his attributes nor ways.

That there is an Eternal First Cause of all things may be argued from this,—that something must always have existed, else nothing could ever have been brought into being. Every reader will feel that the word *something*, in such connection, is not so reverent an expression as the case requires, but a more appropriate and less general term could not be used without seeming to beg the question.

We should deem it trifling, or else an amusing fiction, if some one should relate that wood, iron, nails, screws, lime, bricks, and paints of different colors, came together and arranged themselves in due order, and made a house. If one should cast a font of types into the air, or shake

them together and throw them down, and a proper number of them should be found to have arranged themselves so as to compose the Declaration of American Independence, another set the Ten Commandments, another the Lord's Prayer, it would be far less than we must suppose to have happened if there were no Great First Cause of all things.

We are familiar with the story of the globe suspended from a wall, and with the answer of the friend, when an Atheist asked him how or why it was there? That it should always have been there, or that it should have come there of itself, is no more than the Atheist required his friend to believe respecting our globe.

Matter is not eternal, for it is changeable. Change implies that a thing is not of necessity just as it is, and therefore it is not eternal.

It only removes the difficulty further back, but does not solve it, to account for the existence of all things on the supposition of an eternal series, one thing being derived from the preceding, and so on. Let a chain be immeasurably long, there must, nevertheless, somewhere be a staple from which it depends. An endless perpendicular chain is an impossibility; for if there be of necessity a support to one link, all the links require it, and so the first.

Some have insisted on the eternity of men, and of each animal and insect tribe. But the records of the human race in the earth in the form of fossil remains extend back only about six thousand years. Animals

are found deeper in the geological formations than men. Hieroglyphical writings have been discovered which were believed to be of greater antiquity ; but Champollion and Belzoni have translated them in consistency with the other records of the race.

In this and in other ways we arrive at the conclusion, independently of revelation, that there was one Eternal First Cause of all things.

That this First Cause of all things is an Intelligent Being, is proved by our own existence. The fountain cannot be lower than the stream. One line in the celebrated "Hymn to Deity," by Derzhavin, contains the whole of the argument on this point :

"I am, O God! and surely Thou must be!"

Conscience in man is proof of an Intelligent First Cause. Conscience implies a power higher than we ; for it is always handing us over to a higher judicature.

If there be tribes of men who have no idea of Supreme Deity, they are confessedly exceptions to the general rule. Indeed, such is the conviction of the race at large that there is Supreme Deity, that the effort is to multiply objects of worship ; and men worship "an unknown God" under the craving need which the mind feels of Deity as an object of worship. Even when men make gods after their own evil desires, they show that their nature requires them to believe in a Supreme Power. This belief in Supreme Deity is consistent with an utter practical disbelief of the true God— as the Bible says—

—“when they knew God, they glorified him not as God.”

Though, with the Bible in our hands, we are not left to the light of reason and of nature, merely, on this subject, still, as we have already seen, even the Bible refers us to these sources. This is a reproof to that transcendental pride which seems to disdain this kind of evidence and becomes exceedingly philosophical in its proofs. An argument is intended when it is said, “Every house is builded by some man,”—meaning, evidently, “We infer a designing mind when we see a house; therefore a designing mind must have built all things; that Mind is God.” We know, therefore, that God is an Intelligent Mind, because He has made minds.

It is an illustration of the truth that there are limits to human reason, that the argument by which we prove that there is a God, the First Cause of all things, logically proves that He himself had a First Cause. For we say that marks of design prove a designer, that our own minds make it necessary to believe that there is a Supreme, Creating Mind. Why, then, does not the existence of God prove the same with regard to him? Reason must here confess that she is baffled, and is obliged to turn and seek proofs, in another direction, that there is but One First Cause of all beings and things.

But if there be an Eternal First Cause, how does it appear that there is only one? If one necessarily existed from all eternity, why may there not be two or more Eternal Beings?

Unity of design in creation makes it probable beforehand that there is but one God. Creation bears no marks of two Creators.

GOD (who to be God must be a God of truth, as might easily be shown) declares, “*I am God, and there is none else.*” “Before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be any after me.” “Is there any God besides me? I know not any.”

There is a species of Pantheism at the present day, though it is not new. We find it in some of our popular literature. *Pantheism* is from two Greek words, *all*, and *God*—i. e., *all things are God*. He is, some say, universally diffused—every thing is a part of Him. There is no such thing as sin; but men, who are atoms of Deity, are in some way jostled out of due harmony in their souls, and this makes what we call sin;—but it is merely perturbation, as in a planet; variation, as in a magnetic needle. All things will come right at last, for we are each like a drop of quicksilver, and there is one greater concentrated globule, which we call Deity, into which at last we shall all return. Thus we and all things are *God*—emanations, effluxes, of some Infinite Necessity, to be absorbed into the great *Mind of the Universe*. Such is the theory of men distinguished for literary attainments, as we gather it from their prose and poetry. It is essentially the Hindoo philosophy, Brahminism. The more that the idea of God as a personal Being can be reduced, the less is the feeling of accountableness. The “carnal

mind" in man "is enmity against God" everywhere, under varied manifestations.

The doctrine of man's perfect individuality and accountability, in opposition to this pantheistic idea of aggregation, even in connection with the Supreme Being, and our capacity for perpetual increase in likeness to God while forever maintaining a separate consciousness, are far more worthy of man as an intelligent being. These set before man a career of boundless improvement in all the powers and faculties of his nature forever reaching after perfect likeness to the Infinite One. Pantheists generally think themselves highly intellectual and philosophical; but it is in connection with this very subject of the divine existence that the inspired Apostle says of some, "Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools." In confusing the doctrine of a personal God, they inflict injury on that correlative truth which is one of the foundations and encouragements of all progress, the individuality of man.

The simple idea of an eternal, underived Being is fearful beyond expression. There is no cause of his existence out of himself; for then there would have been something antecedent to him. Then, Who caused that Cause? and so the question would proceed without end. Did God cause his own existence? There is contradiction and absurdity in any such question which our minds feel impelled to ask. Our thoughts are bewildered. We find that we have come to the boundaries of knowledge.

Those solitudes of eternity in which God dwelt alone, that existence of his which never began, and always was, confound us, and we feel our weakness. There is something beyond our comprehension; we are subordinate; our questions receive no answer; we are not supreme; there is a Will independent of ours. There is an aching desire within us to know and understand this dread mystery of eternal being, but we are compelled to submit, and to confess that we are baffled, and that on the most sublime of all questions and themes we know nothing.

But it is most grateful to our feelings that we are not spurned, and that our ignorance and our littleness are not made the occasion of contempt. On the contrary, in the conclusion of the Book of Job, as in other places, we are called upon by the Most High to contemplate this inferiority of ours, — for the purpose of humbling us, indeed, but, — in order that we may, in the best sense, know and enjoy God, and receive his love. God answers us out of the whirlwind, and among his first words are these: “Gird up now thy loins like a man;” — intimating that our ignorance and inferiority must not be allowed to discourage us, and that the proper contemplation of our ignorance, and of God’s incomprehensibility, is the beginning of wisdom. Questions are then put to us by the Most High, confirming our sense of ignorance and inferiority. “Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth?” Our humility is still further increased, when the Most High, instead of questioning us on the subject of his eternity, tells us to explain the simplest things relating to

the rain and ice, the ostrich and the peacock, and to contemplate the mysteries of leviathan and behemoth, and to wonder at the eagle and the war-horse.

In this connection, we have an instance of beautiful simplicity and grandeur in the way of illustration, in the following passages: "Behold, God is great, and we know him not, neither can the number of his years be searched out. For he maketh small the drops of water; they pour down rain according to the vapor thereof." Inspiration alone would venture to be so simple.

The word JEHOVAH is in itself a wonderfully significant word. Many curious and deeply interesting things are said with regard to it, which cannot here be repeated. Its central idea is, *to be*. The prefix and suffix, some say, are, respectively, past and future, so that the word would signify, *I am, I was, I shall be*. This, whether fanciful or not, corresponds with the ascription to the Almighty in Revelation, "Who wast, and art, and art to come," and to the paraphrase of the dread name in the opening of the book: "Grace be unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come." Moreover, the Greek expression for Jehovah is the present participle of the verb *to be*, with the definite article;—literally, *the being*. The noun, Jehovah, forms no verb. It does not admit an article, nor take an affix. "It is not placed in a state of construction with other words, but other words may be in construction with it."

It is interesting to know that God did not reveal himself at first by that name which signifies self-existence.

This He himself tells us : “And God spake unto Moses, and said unto him, I am the Lord ; and I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of God Almighty ; but by my name JEHOVAH was I not known unto them.” That name was disclosed in connection with Israel’s deliverance out of bondage. Great use was made, in the earlier ages, of a *name*, it being taken as symbolical of something, or as a memorial, or as suggesting something which it was desirable should be kept before the mind. It would be difficult to describe, or to imagine, the different associations in the minds of the early worshippers of God, in the use, successively, of these two names of the Most High ; but we know that there must have been progress in the knowledge of God in the minds of men by means of the new name, and therefore that the Most High regards the attribute of self-existence as specially suited to advance our conceptions of his greatness.

Almost every other attribute can be carved in symbol, and so can be an object of idolatry. Self-existence cannot be represented by a symbol. Eternity is a *circle*, omniscience an *eye*, power an *arm* ; but the name JEHOVAH suggests an idea of which there is no similitude. The Assembly of Divines who made the Westminster Catechism were at a loss for an answer to the simple question, What is God ? In much perplexity, it was proposed to unite in prayer. One of the younger members of the Assembly prayed, beginning his prayer with these words : “ O God, thou art a Spirit, infinite, eternal, unchangeable, in being, wisdom,

power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth." When they rose from their knees, these words were recalled, written down, and adopted, as their answer to the question, What is God? It will be useful to think of this in all our difficulties on the subject of religion. Luther has told us, by his familiar Latin inscription in his study, that "To have prayed well is to have studied well."

In a sceptical frame of mind, to which we are all, at times, more or less tempted, and, possibly, are led almost to doubt the being of God, nothing better serves the purpose of faith than to open the Bible, anywhere, and to see the name of God in connection with some asserted act or event,—it may be apparently a casual thing, or a mere connective phrase. "The Lord spake unto Moses," perhaps are the words which meet the eye; or we hear a man cry out, "O God, thou art my God," or, "Praise the Lord;" or the simple name of God, catching the eye, seems to fix the wavering thought and give it assurance. An unbeliever may scorn this, as not sufficiently honoring the human understanding. On going home from his debating club, however, where he has spent an evening in ridiculing religion as beneath the notice of an intellectual man, his child will climb his knee and ask him why he does not pray with her, like her mother? and by means of that simple question he will, perhaps, become a believer in Christianity and its determined advocate, to be ridiculed in his turn by those who think that our reason can be reached only by what they call "logic." But logic is not dependent on slow and measured pro-

cesses of argumentation. Coleridge says truly, "The feeling is oftentimes the deeper reason."

In our desire to know with certainty that there is such a Supreme Being, it is a relief to open the Bible, and to meet with such words as these: "Thus saith the High and Lofty One that inhabiteth eternity." "Before the day was, I am he." "Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth or the world, even from everlasting to everlasting thou art God." "Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God." "Who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords; who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen nor can see."

Religion evidently begins with mysteries. Of course, then, we must not be surprised if we meet with mysteries in every thing connected with our discoveries of God. As there are unfathomable mysteries about his being, there may be such with regard to the mode of his existence, his government, his methods of dealing with men.

If we can keep our minds calm on the subject of the Eternity of God, if reason does not totter on her seat at the contemplation of underived existence, it will be strange if any other mystery relating to God should disturb us. He who can bring his reason to bow reverently at the idea of a Being who had no beginning, is well prepared to receive any communication of his will. •

The Incomprehensibleness of God is the foundation of perpetual progress in knowledge. It would be a calamity

if God could ever be comprehended. If man or angel could ever say that he had sailed round the ocean of the divine existence and found no remaining inaccessible sea nor undiscovered pole, that he had recorded all its latitudes and sounded all its depths, it would be dismal and portentous tidings. The unknown is the incentive to thought and progress ; the eternal incomprehensibility of God lays the foundation for the perpetual advancement of his intelligent creatures in greatness and bliss.

Our future being is commensurate with the Divine existence. It is as far to look forward to the end of our existence as it is to the beginning of his. We shrink into nothing when we think of one who never began to be. So an animal, who could reason, might feel in meditating upon the future endless existence of man. When God says, "Of my years there is no end," the soul, with reverence and awe toward its Creator, may add, Of my years there is no end.

There is no cause to wonder that God should love man, nor is any thing disproportionate which God can do for him. It is reasonable, too, that God should love man as He does love him without partiality for one above another. We look upon twenty or thirty men standing on the road hammering down the paving stones ; the eye perhaps discerns but little difference in the members of the group, and they pass for a gang of men ; but each of them has an existence before him as endless as that of his Maker. Such thoughts serve to awaken love within us toward our fellow-men. We ought, in a proper

sense, to value ourselves, as being made for an immortal existence, endowed by him "who only hath immortality," with an attribute of his own divine nature.

There is enough in the thought of this Eternal God to awaken pain and sorrow at the idea of having sinned against him, of being in any way contrary to him; and this, too, irrespective of any injurious consequences likely to befall us. For its own sake, as intrinsically right, and even though we might never reap any benefit from it, godly sorrow, leading to repentance, should be exercised by every one who knows God, on perceiving that he has not rendered to him that which is his due.

There is sublimity, as well as reasonableness, in religion. Prayer to such a Being, encouraged, and not only so, but required, by him, heard too, and answered, is obviously our first duty, our highest privilege. "Man, in audience with the Deity," attains his greatest elevation.

As to the feeling on the part of many, that prayer to such a Being, and especially any thing of the nature of love and communion, is forbidden by the distance between us and by the solemn awe which a proper contemplation of God awakens, we have a remarkable recognition of this natural apprehension, and a kind regard to it, on the part of the Most High.

He evidently recognizes it where he begins by saying, "For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy;" all which awakens dread, and increases a sense of distance between us and God,

which is not abated when he adds, "I dwell in the high and holy place;" and yet all this is designed as a preface to this assurance,— "with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the heart of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." We have in this a recognition and an appreciation on the part of God of the natural dread which man feels in approaching his Maker, and an implied answer to our arguments against the possibility of intercourse with him.

It is exceedingly useful to contemplate, with a proper spirit, this dread mystery of God. He himself encourages it in his word, by repeatedly bringing to view his self-existence, his eternity. It is useful to bring our minds into connection with that which contradicts all our consciousness, our experience and observation, like this truth of the self-existence of God. Every thing which we see and know had a beginning. We, ourselves, with our present powers, capable of endless increase, began to be. But God says to us, "Before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be any after me." If we try to comprehend or explain this, we are baffled as the ocean is in its strife to overcome the land:—"though the waves toss themselves, yet can they not prevail; though they roar, yet can they not pass over." This serves to make us humble. A proper recognition and a devout contemplation of this great mystery so strike the mind with a sense of its littleness, as to curb the proud attempts of reason to explain things which lie beyond its province. We find ourselves brought to the limits of knowledge in one direction, and

the fear of God falls upon us, his excellency makes us afraid. The question will recur: What made it necessary that there should be a God? What determined it? How did it come to pass? The immediate answer which arises is, Nothing determined it. It did not come to pass. He always was. So, if we look at the sun with the naked eye for one moment, we feel that our eyesight is a limited faculty. That sun, however, is but a spark compared with the whole creation of God. No wonder, if we attempt to comprehend God's eternity, that our eyesight is blasted; the mind reels, it loses its self-control.

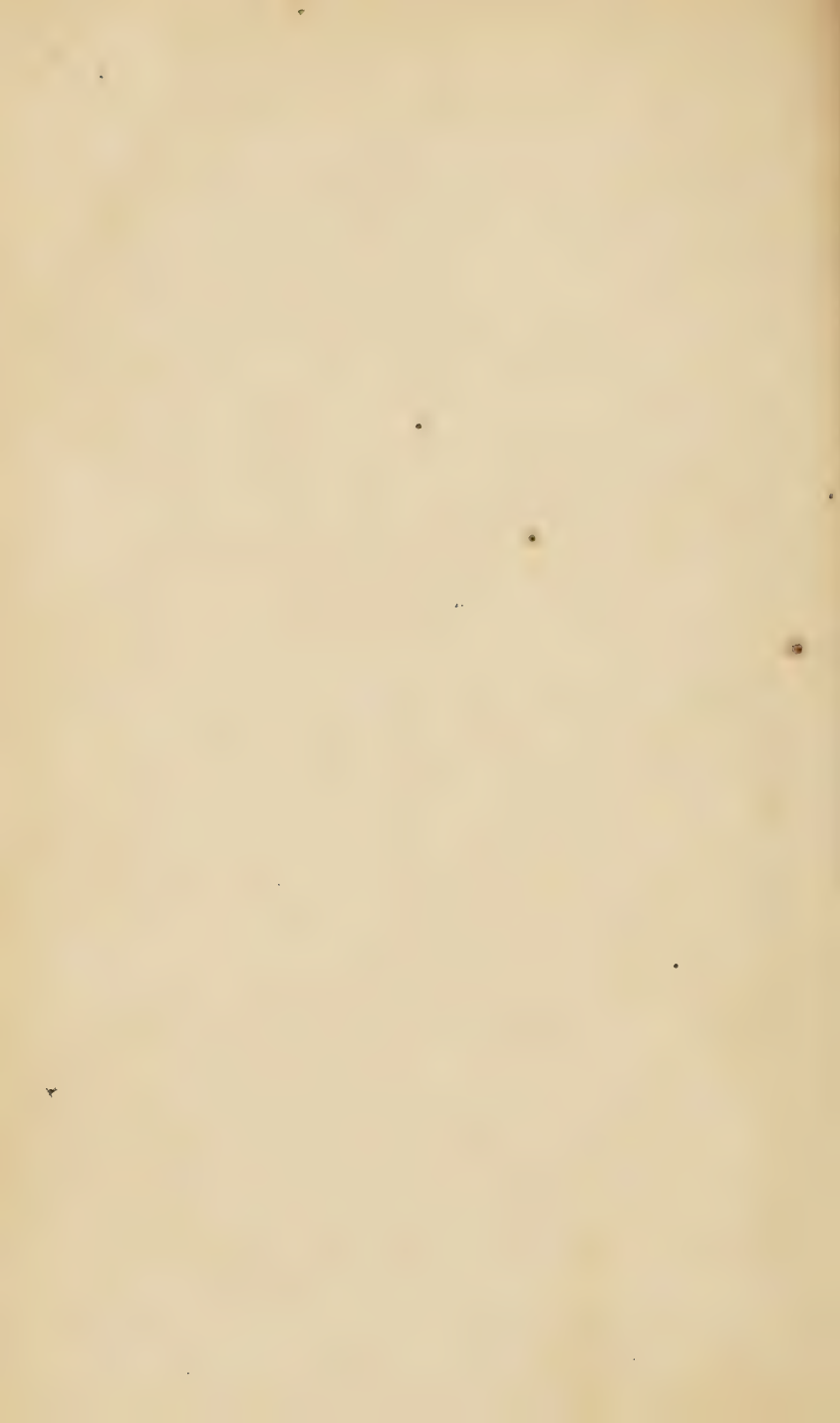
This predisposes us, if we feel aright, to seek for a revelation from Him. Has he spoken to me? When and where? and what is the proof of it? and what does He teach me? what will He have me believe concerning Him? what duties does He require of me?

Thus we are prepared to consider the subject of a Divine Revelation. It will help us in all our inquiries relating to religious truth if we remember that Theology is properly, The knowledge of God; and that the more we know of God, if our hearts are right with Him, the more simple He seems to us. "Increasing in the knowledge of God" is indeed, in one sense, going out to sea, the prospect widening, the horizon ever receding; and at the same time, to the heart of one who loves God, knowing more of Him is like coming to land, rounding capes, entering bays, seeing the waves roll ashore, and the woods meeting the waters. Perfectness in our knowledge of God is progressively attained the more that we love Him.

Since men are equally limited as to their capacity of understanding that which is infinite, knowledge of the Infinite One must be derived chiefly from those spiritual conceptions of his character which are imparted only to a spiritual mind. "Every one that loveth, is born of God, and knoweth God." "He that loveth not, knoweth not God, for God is love." We infer from this that our conceptions of even the natural attributes of God depend very much upon our complacency in his moral perfections.

II.

DIVINE REVELATION.



II.

DIVINE REVELATION.

WHEN De Tocqueville was in this country, he asked to see a Sabbath School. He was struck with seeing a Bible in the hands of every scholar. "Is this common?" said he. "What a mighty influence it must have on a nation!"

Think of the number of Sabbath School pupils in the world, and that the Bible is the subject of their study. It must be a supernatural book. If it were newly discovered, we might account for the interest which it excites, by its novelty. Though new to many who study it, they who teach it and are familiar with it are equally interested by the book; it continues to excite and to repay their efforts to understand and teach it. No other book could endure such a test. Take that interesting book, Audubon's "Birds of America." There is every thing in it to excite the interest of the young and old, in one department of Natural History. But before a great while, all would tire of it. You could not bring the children of America together year after year to study birds. But let us take "the myriad-minded

Shakespeare." It is no risk to say that even he would fail to keep up the interest of the human mind sufficiently to secure a periodical study of his thoughts and language by the young, the middle-aged, and the old, from year to year. We may go further. Not even a book founded on the Bible itself would be capable of affording such interest to the human mind, if made the subject of periodical study.

There is another test to which the Bible is subjected, greater, if possible, than that which is applied to it by its use in the Sabbath Schools of all Christian lands.

Let us think of the Christians of all countries where the Bible is found, sitting with that Book in their hands every morning previous to entering upon the duties of the day. At night, they repair again to this Book. What must the Book be to furnish the minds and hearts of intelligent people, and people of every degree of capacity, with such exhaustless supplies of thought and emotion? Shakespeare, again, could not stand such a test. "Do not read *Pilgrim's Progress* to me any more," said a cultivated missionary lady, near her end, to her husband; "Bunyan tires me; but I can hear you read the Bible without fatigue." Certain books for certain purposes may have an unfailing interest for particular individuals, as in the case of Alexander the Great, who is said to have kept Homer under his pillow. But here is a book whose interest is not confined to particular classes and conditions, but all who love it (and they are counted by millions) find it appropriate to every time

and condition. The young married pair begin their wedded life with reading it in their new home ; it is the only book which is admitted stately on festive occasions ; it is in place at funerals ; it is not a solemnity for a Christian to swear on any other book ; it furnishes texts for all the pulpits of Christendom Sabbath after Sabbath ; it has been the occasion of more volumes in various departments of knowledge than any other book ; it has filled the picture galleries of the Old World with more productions of art than have been occasioned by any other volume, whether of history or poetry. Apt quotations from it reinforce the arguments and appeals of the secular orator ; they have an effect upon the mind unlike quotations from any other source. Its effect upon the mind is described by saying, It “ is quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword.”

Josephus has written a history parallel with the history in the Bible. Few, comparatively, of those who read the Bible have ever seen Josephus, and of those who are familiar with his writings no one ever thinks to place him on a level with Moses and the evangelists.

So that we may accord with the sentiment of Sir Walter Scott on his dying bed, when he said to his son-in-law, “ Bring me the book ;” and when Mr. Lockhart said, “ What book, Sir ?” “ There is but one Book,” replied the great British writer of fiction. Such considerations as these are sufficient to satisfy any reflecting mind that the Bible is a supernatural book. Had it obtained a false reputation as such, it is more than time that, with

other exploded pretensions to supernatural origin and authority, it should have passed away. But the Bible never had such a hold upon the human mind as now, if we may infer any thing from the extent of its present circulation.

Now here is a Book exerting such an influence on the mind of the human race, accepted as their guide in religion by all who acknowledge the only living and true God.

We may, therefore, adopt what is called the *a posteriori* mode of reasoning, namely, from effect to cause; we may take the fact and reason backward, and say, God would not have allowed such a book, under his name and with his asserted sanction, to exert that influence, unless it had proceeded from Him. Nor would He have allowed it to hold such a place without making it such that it might safely be taken for an infallible guide. Infallibility is essential to confidence in a guide or directory; or, if it be liable to variations for any cause, those variations must have laws which can be ascertained, and the knowledge of them be applied, to give the great standard a perfect authority.

Accordingly we may say that the Most High, knowing the use which would be made of the Bible by the great family of man, prepared it with a view to its being an infallible guide in the knowledge of Himself and of our duty to Him.

He knew that men, in all conditions and under all circumstances, would resort to it for direction and for

consolation ; therefore He must have prepared it, with divine skill, for such a purpose. This is true unless the Bible and its influence are yet to prove a delusion. If the Bible justly exerts the power which it holds over the human mind, and will continue to do so, we are shut up to the conclusion that a benevolent God ordained and sanctioned it.

For we have seen, in the preceding pages, that *design* is the great proof that there is an intelligent, creating Mind, a First Cause of all things. With equal conclusiveness we may take the Bible and its influence, and argue that they evince a designer, and that that designer must have been He to whom the Bible ascribes its origin.

In Paley's celebrated chapter on the Goodness of the Deity, and in some of the Bridgewater Treatises, — for example, on the Human Hand, — we infer the benevolence of God from these his works. But the Bible is most wonderfully adapted to the human mind, and to all its conditions. There is, therefore, benevolence in its plan and object ; and benevolence far beyond that which we infer from any created thing. If so, there is justice in its claim to be that which its readers make of it, — an infallible revelation of the character and will of God.

When He hung the earth upon nothing, He fixed the North Star, and He endowed the north itself with a mysterious power of magnetism to guide the mariner and the pathless traveller. He cannot have left the soul of man without a sure source of information as to

that which he "is to believe concerning God, and what duty God requires of him." If the Bible be not that Word of God, we have no Word of God.

We say that from the beginning God has afforded man an infallible directory to the knowledge of Himself and of the duty of man to his God. At first it was imparted by word of mouth, God holding personal converse with men. Meanwhile, men with whom He thus conversed were preparing records of his communications to them, embodying principles and precepts which would be of universal application in human affairs. When God had ceased to speak directly to men, they had his written messages containing his law, which law He again caused to be illustrated by long histories of its application to individuals and nations, these histories being recorded, one after another, for succeeding times. Then the Son of God appears, and his words are recorded by those whom He appointed for that purpose, promising them that all things should be brought to their remembrance. Thus the Bible is completed. The great question now is, Have we an infallible Bible?

Jesus had one. He amended not one tittle of the Bible as it existed in his day. He reproved no scribe for altering it. He did not set it aside. Yet he was the world's great Teacher. When a teacher from a Christian land goes into a Hindoo or Chinese school, does he retain the old geographies and the reading books, without emendation, or cautionary instruction as

to their defects? The Saviour set his seal to the Scriptures of his day as of infallible authority, and therefore of essential accuracy. He reproved the men of his day for making void the word of God through their traditions, but not a reproof do we find for "corrupted text," "various readings," "grave errors." Our Scriptures are the same as those in use by the Saviour and his Apostles. They were infallible with Him. Should they not be so with us? Let this be refuted, or let the Old Testament, at least, be admitted to be of divine authority.

But the great subject of these infallible Scriptures in the Saviour's time was Himself, his coming, his nature, his person, his work. Therefore the infallible Old Testament must have an infallible counterpart. If Christ declared that not one jot nor one tittle should pass from the law till all be fulfilled, we either now possess, or we must expect, a perfect infallible completion of a work in which the Old Testament constitutes one part, as really as one shell of a bivalve implies and requires another.

Of course, many were not slow to write things which they themselves believed, or wished others to believe, were inspired. Some of these writings gained credence and authority for different lengths of time; but one of the most remarkable and satisfactory things with regard to the constitution of the Bible is the way in which the uninspired writings dropped out of use. Councils did not depose them. The human heart deposed them; they

were tried in all seasons of human necessity, and were found wanting, and they became generally disesteemed; and then councils made enactments against them, expressing the common verdict of the world. The Christian's closet, sick rooms, dying beds, deposed the Apocrypha before it was publicly set aside.

The Jew and the Christian watched each other with great jealousy as to their respective sacred writings. The Pharisees and Sadducees were opposed to each other on the point of literal adherence to the written word, the Pharisees claiming to add traditions to the Scriptures, and the Sadducees with equal zeal defending the text and the literal interpretation. God, who uses evil men to accomplish some of his purposes, employed these hostile sects to guard his written word.

To analyze inspiration is very much like anatomizing a smile. No one can tell how much is due to muscles, how much to nerves, how much to blood, how much to thought, and how much to emotion. But a smile is proof of an indwelling soul.

“ —— smiles from reason flow,
To brutes denied.”

As to the nature of Inspiration, the degree in which the Bible is inspired, we shall find that the highest theory of inspiration is the most easily maintained. That theory is, that a benevolent God, who from the beginning communicated directly with men by word of mouth, has given to men, at the withdrawal of his visible

presence and audible words, a written Word, which is a divinely authorized and infallible exposition of his will.

It is implied in this proposition that the Bible is as really a communication from God as though it were written on his throne with his own hand, and had been conveyed from heaven to earth in the sight of men.

To this proposition, derived from our belief in the benevolence of God, the wants of men, and the manner in which God met those wants from the beginning (and we no less need an infallible guide at the present time), there are natural and obvious objections.

1. It is said that the great variety in the style of the different books is inconsistent with the idea that God dictated the whole volume. — But do we not rather see in this variety of style and manner an additional illustration of the divine skill and goodness? If God should inspire all the singing birds on the first day of May with some sudden joy, and give them a new song, we should not expect to hear the canary bird sing precisely like the nightingale, but each bird would express its song in notes peculiar to itself. God has not made every thing of one color. ‘There are, it may be, so many kinds of voices in the world, and none of them is without signification.’ The same benevolence which ordained them for our pleasure, also had regard to our tastes and feelings in making the Bible various as to its style and manner. It is not all didactic, nor poetic, nor hortatory, nor historical; it is not all sublime in diction, nor is it all extremely simple; but regard is had to the subject in hand; and

the result of the whole is that the Book is suited to every capacity and taste ; and in every department of writing it has the preëminence. It was written during a period of fifteen hundred years, and from thirty to forty men were employed to write it.

2. But it is said there is a loose, uncertain way of stating many things which does not consist with the idea of its being divinely inspired. Things are stated indefinitely ; but if the writer were inspired, he must have known precisely the nature, or number, and quantity, and the time, of the thing described. Then, again, there is exaggeration, which it is said cannot be supposed would be used in a divine communication.

The answer is, If the Bible is a book for the human race, it is written not for angels, nor for any other order of beings, but for man. It will be adapted to his laws of thought and speech. If witnesses testify in it, they will testify as honest witnesses testify in human courts of justice, with general agreement, but with such discrepancies in non-essentials as will confirm our belief in their honesty. Instead of giving the exact number in every case, it will adopt the large, general way of speaking which is natural and proper in common things, and such as good historians generally employ. Its metaphors will sometimes be bold and free, not timorously and slavishly exact. If the armies of the East are gathered together it will be likely to say of them that they "lay along in the valley like grasshoppers for multitude ; and their camels were without number, as the sand by

the sea for multitude.” This gives a more correct idea of multitude than though the precise number had been stated,—say, three hundred and sixty thousand two hundred and forty-one.

So with regard to the multitudes before the throne,—it is of course below the truth to say that “the number of them was a thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands;” and yet that expression gives us a better idea of vastness than a number definitely and exactly expressed, though it were greater than this. We would not hold in great repute the taste or judgment of one who should insist that inspiration should have told us the precise time of day, instead of saying, “and when the sun was hot,” or “when the day began to wear away.”

Far more in accordance with our ordinary mode of expressing gratitude is it, to say, “How precious, also, are thy thoughts unto me, O God; how great is the sum of them; they are more in number than the sand,” than though one should say precisely how many blessings he had received, supposing that they could be reckoned up in order.

But when we come to cases in which exactness is essential, we must expect to find it,—as, for example, in the number of the first deacons, the number of the Apostles, geographical statements, and things of like sort.

3. But it is said that mutilations have happened to the inspired text, so that learned men differ as to the meaning of certain passages. If God gave men an authentic

record of his mind and will, would not the same benevolence which prepared the Bible for man keep it from essential injury?

The answer is, No essential injury has happened to the Bible. Gilbert Wakefield says that the "various readings" of different passages proposed by scholars amount to more than one hundred thousand. Even in this multitude of emendations, involving great uncertainty of interpretation, the testimony of the Bible on any one subject relating to faith or duty is not essentially impaired. But there are difficulties, for example, in the various genealogies, which it is hard to explain with certainty. It is a wonder that, without the art of printing, and being perpetually copied by the pen, the text of Scripture has suffered no more damage. If it had suffered nothing in this way during the transcriptions from age to age, it would have been a miracle. The hand of time has been upon it. But its testimony in every thing essential to the great purpose for which it was given is unimpaired.

4. But is every passage inspired? And did every passage need inspiration? "Salute Asyncritus, Hermas, Phlegon," — was this inspired? "The cloak which I left at Troas bring with thee, — but especially the parchments." Did it need the influence of the Holy Spirit to think or to express this? — All these things are in accordance with the great and wise purpose of God to make the Bible a book adapted to human modes of thought and feeling. These little things, as it were, tone down the

divine work to our susceptibilities. These things were thrown in to make the work human, not angelic. They are earth on the roots of a plant, showing that the plant came from the soil. Every great work of art has small touches in it, concerning which one might also inquire, Did they require genius and its inspiration to introduce them? We see a rope hanging from the top of the cross in the picture of the Crucifixion by Rubens. Could not a common hand have painted that rope? The genius of Rubens brought it into the picture to give a naturalness to the sketch. A common mind might have regarded it as too trivial for such a place. It is a part of the great whole. To select it and question whether that stroke in the picture really required the mind and pencil of Rubens, is to criticize in a way which, in a gallery of paintings, would bring a man's taste into disrepute.

5. But if the Bible was made for all men, how happens it that so small a part of the race possesses it?—Every nation once had the knowledge of the true God. Many have lost it, and they have entailed ages of ignorance and sin upon their posterity. This belongs among those truths of which we are compelled to say, "How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out." It also teaches us the nature and extent of that dread law by which the sins of men may be visited upon their descendants for many generations.

6. -But there are things in the Bible which cannot be read and should not be read in public, nor even before a family.

So there are in the statute book of every State, and in the dictionaries, and in the books of domestic medicine. But if the Bible had failed to speak of certain things, it would have been deficient as a reprover and guide in human conduct. Its suitableness for public reading in all its parts is not a test of its propriety. This is so in other things besides the Bible.

It is not claimed that the men who wrote the Bible were necessarily under divine guidance wherever and however employed. When the business in hand needed divine interposition, it was given. But when, for example, they differed in opinion and in action, it had not been judged necessary that they should have supernatural aid. As writers of the Bible they claim to speak for God; and when they do not speak in his name and by his authority, we are informed that they speak "by permission and not by commandment."

Things too numerous to be dwelt upon at length crowd upon the mind as evidences of the divine inspiration of the Bible. A few will be mentioned:

1. Though written by nearly forty men during a period of about fifteen hundred years, it does not contradict itself. One plan runs through the whole, so that the Bible to a very great degree is its own interpreter. This, in the opinion of some, is the allusion in that passage by Peter: "Knowing that no Scripture is of any private interpretation;" — that is, it belongs to a system, it has no isolated character, no separate, private meaning. This is far different from that gloss given to the passage

by the Papists, who would have us understand by it that we have no right of private judgment and interpretation as concerns the word of God.

2. The frequent occurrence of the expression, "Thus saith the Lord," and other forms of speaking in God's name, which meet us constantly in the Bible, make one think what hardihood and effrontery he must have had, — indeed beyond belief, — who would have dared to use such asseverations without authority. But if these forms of quotation were authorized, the Bible is the word of God. It is impossible to conceive of such depravity as would be implied in saying fifty times in as many chapters, "the word of the Lord came unto me," when it was not true. One great lie, we can conceive, might be forged and uttered; but to be repeating it every few lines, requires a degree of heaven-daring impiety which certainly in men otherwise exemplary is not to be looked for, unless it be by an extremely credulous infidel.

3. The perfect morality of the Bible is a proof of its divine origin. All other standards of morality favor human weakness and sin. It shields no good man when he has done wickedly, but it deals impartially, without respect of persons. It is remarkable that not only is no attempt made to give the least palliation to the sins of David and Peter, but that no kind words are used respecting them, to engage a feeling of tenderness and compassion for them. With every new translation of the Bible, the knowledge of their sins is travelling over

the earth, fearless of the scepticism and the sneers of men, of whom if all were known, perhaps, as all will be known in the great day, David and Peter would at least have nothing to fear in a comparison with them. The Bible alone, of all biographies, deals thus faithfully with character.

4. It is perfectly adapted to every human mind and heart, in every possible variety and combination of circumstances. Bad men could not have forged such a book; good men would not have done it.

5. The absence of many things in the Bible suggests a powerful proof of its inspiration. Without infallible, divine guidance, it seems impossible that those who had it in their power should not have attempted to impart to men that which they so eagerly desire and seek after, namely, particular knowledge concerning the intermediate state. Silence reigns over all that region of knowledge, unbroken by any intimation whatever on the part of those who have returned temporarily from within the veil. That this silence is benevolent, no one can question who reflects upon the probable consequences of encouraging our curiosity and inquiry respecting the things which lie beyond this world. If uninspired men had composed the Bible, it is easy to suppose that they would have said something to gratify human curiosity with regard to those who had been dead. None but Almighty power can have closed all lips to those things which relate to the world of spirits. Modern pretensions to a knowledge of supernatural

things show us what use men would have made of the slightest insight with regard to things within the veil.

6. The evangelists have not in one instance passed an encomium upon Jesus, nor upon any of his friends. Nor have they thrown out one reflection upon his enemies. This is not the manner of man. Had there been imposture or enthusiasm, this would have been otherwise. Christ's life is not praised, nor his death lamented, his friends commended, nor his enemies blamed. Every thing is told with perfect simplicity, the naked truth is stated, and it is neither aggravated nor adorned, whether it relate to evil or to good. Unless the minds of the writers had been under the control of a superior power, they never would have written in this manner, for it is contrary to all human experience.

As to the subject of Verbal Inspiration, we do not claim that each word is spoken or written mechanically by the Holy Spirit acting on the faculties of inspired men. This is an unworthy view of the subject. If the Holy Spirit only superintended the use of words by the sacred writers, this would insure infallibility; and that is all which would be necessary to plenary inspiration. But it cannot be explained why the language of Scripture, if there were no supernatural influence extending into it, should uniformly have the indescribable peculiarity which characterizes it, — a peculiarity which cannot be fully accounted for by our sacred associations with Holy Writ. Besides, we think in words. If inspiration must be communicated to the Sacred Writings, it is unphilosophical

to say that the thoughts were suggested, guided, superintended, but that no regard was had to the words, each writer being wholly left to express his inspired thoughts as he pleased. Right words in the right places are essential to the object of a communication. If, therefore, God purposes to make a communication to men, he must have perfect control not only of the thoughts, but also of the words, in which it is to be conveyed. This will be consistent with the entire freedom of the writer; for we are told that "the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets." It is also consistent with the employment by each writer of his own peculiar habit of expressing himself, and with the infusion of his peculiar temperament into his communication.

If any one supposes that God could not, consistently with the laws of mind, inspire men to speak and write, by suggesting, or guiding their words (though it is difficult to see why there is any inconsistency in this), we may allude to the well-known fact that mental excitements are great helps to words. Every one whose mind is greatly quickened by a subject of thought, or by strong feelings, talks to himself; we notice this in the streets; we all find ourselves setting forth to ourselves, in words, when we are alone, the strong points of a case which deeply interests our feelings. Moreover, so much depends, oftentimes, upon a word, that it is difficult to conceive of plenary inspiration without supposing a divine agency in the words of Scripture. But this does not make it necessary to believe that the power of using words was

taken possession of in any such way as to reduce the choice of words to a mere mechanical act. It is the fear of being obliged to believe this which leads many to reject more than they really intend to do in speaking against Verbal Inspiration. All that is essential on this point is this: Did not the Holy Spirit secure the expression of his thoughts and of his will in such words as he preferred? In saying that he did, we no more deny the freedom of the writers than we do in saying that they thought under the direction of the Spirit.

A confirmation of supernaturalness in the inspiration of the Bible is found in this, that Christians in great trouble, as well as in devotion, quote Scripture to themselves and to others as they quote no other language. We are astonished at the pertinency and applicability of passages which we had not before considered. To converse with an experimental Christian in great trouble is like walking on a stormy shore when the sea has thrown to land its precious deposits. No one who has a relish for spiritual things can doubt, at such times, that the Holy Ghost, the Sanctifier and Comforter, made the Bible for the human heart; it is 'not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.'

But this brings to view a truth which we do well to consider, namely, That it is as impossible to give an unregenerate man a clear conception of inspiration, as it is of the deity of the Lord Jesus. He must have experience, in order to appreciate the very highest kinds of evidence pertaining to both of these truths. He will be apt to

cavil till he has it; and when his experience makes these things real to him, he will find himself demanding them as necessary to his spiritual life, and no arguments will be able to disprove them; for they will have become identified with his spiritual consciousness.

The conclusion of the Bible looks as though revelation were finished until the end of time. In this one book, therefore, God has included all which it is necessary for man to know in this world concerning God and a future state. When we think of the vastness of the subjects which lie about us and beyond us, and the infinite importance of authentic information about them, the Bible assumes an importance and value not unlike that of a lamp to one in a dark, subterranean passage; or the sides of a ship to one who reflects that a hundred fathoms of water are underneath him; or a friendly island to one who has gained a foothold there, he knows not how many miles from main land. The Bible is, in some respect, like a narrow foot-bridge over a deep stream, with midnight darkness round about.

Nothing can exceed the injury which a man inflicts upon his fellow men who weakens their confidence in this book, or in any way impairs its influence over them. Those who cut the telegraphic wires, on the arrival of important commercial news, are justly reprobated; but there is no other means of communicating between God and men if the Bible is disowned. "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead." The first

thing which comes to pass when an unbeliever begins to fear God, is, he gives implicit credence to the Bible, and the first step in unbelief usually is to underrate the Word of God.

We sometimes meet with those who seem to deplore the superstitious reverence which people have for the Bible, and they write to caution men against such indiscriminating and enthusiastic love. Now there are children whose love for their parents is almost idolatrous. They see no faults in them; they find every virtue in those parents. Suppose that one should write a book to children, cautioning them against excessive filial love. It is not an error which requires public reproof. Cautionary labored suggestions on that topic would awaken the suspicion of cold heartedness in the reprover. We should at least doubt if his own childhood had been happy.

Many objections against the Bible are the result of mistake and want of knowledge. A cavilling sea-captain once quoted this passage, as though it read thus in the Bible (referring to Acts xxviii. 13), "And from thence we fetched a compass" *aboard*, "and came to Rhegium." He said that as there was no *compass* in those days, the Bible, or that part of it at least, must be an imposture.

If the Bible be all which we claim for it, we feel disposed to acquit David of excessive zeal and enthusiasm when he says, "Thy Word shall not be sold for thousands of gold and silver." "More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also

than honey and the honeycomb," is his impassioned language when speaking of the utterances of the Most High in the forms of precepts, testimonies, and statutes. The written Word of God now being the only source from which those things, so precious to David, are conveyed to us, has all the intrinsic value, and should excite all the enthusiastic love, which are expressed in the strong and ardent language of the royal bard.

The Bible is better than visions. So Peter tells us, who was on the mount where Christ was transfigured, and Moses and Elijah appeared and talked with Him. But what effect had this heavenly vision on the three disciples? First, they were sore afraid; secondly, they fell asleep; and thirdly, they "wist not what they said." No wonder, then, that Peter, describing this, should say: "WE HAVE A MORE SURE WORD OF PROPHECY." One reason why it was more sure, was, it was written. A writing is surer evidence than speech. We remember that it is the frequent language of Christ and of the evangelists, when they decide a thing beyond dispute, "It is written." But modern unbelievers object to the idea that God should make a revelation to mankind in a book. They represent it as derogatory to the varying, expanding views which the human mind takes of truth, to think that all which God will say to us can be comprised in one volume. But it is noticeable that when these objectors seek to influence the human mind by their discoveries in moral science, they straightway resort to the press, and to the making of a book. A

pamphlet or volume; which men can take into their hands in their quiet, meditative hours, they deem essential to the best influence on public opinion, and they would none of them regard it as absurd should all nations and all times hold some particular work of theirs as the standard in its department. God employed thirty, or forty men, through a period of fifteen hundred years, to prepare a compendious exhibition of duty, and of his character and will, as illustrated for so long a time, in the history of individuals and nations. No one who uses the press to influence others, we should suppose, would think lightly of it, or be able to suggest any more effectual way of bestowing on man an all-sufficient and infallible guide. That such a guide, could we obtain it, would be an inestimable favor, none will dispute. It may be repeated, — the benevolence of God is a proof, which cannot be exceeded by demonstration, that He has bestowed such an indispensable and invaluable gift upon man. We find Him, from the very first, holding personal converse with men; and now that He has ceased, the progress of the race, by his goodness, in useful arts, and in all that exalts mankind, forbids us to believe that we have retrograded in the privilege or in the mode of receiving authentic instruction from God our Maker. We, therefore, may not only believe that the Bible is a divine revelation, but we are warranted in holding that, for all the purposes of human welfare and progress, no better form of divine revelation has been at any time enjoyed by man.



III.

THE TRINITY.



III.

THE TRINITY.

THE common mode of discussing the subject of the Trinity is, to begin by saying of God, "THERE IS ONE; IS HE THREE?"

When we do this, we begin at the infancy of knowledge upon this subject, and grope our way along to fuller light.

But there is another way of treating the subject, which is more in accordance with the ordinary method of deducing a general proposition from ascertained facts. We begin where our knowledge ends, and so reason from without to the central truth.

If the New Testament reveals THREE having the same divine names, attributes, works and worship, we may properly begin the investigation of the subject not by saying, "There is One; is He Three?" but, "THERE ARE THREE; ARE THEY ONE?"

Let us assume that in the early ages of the world One God is revealed in opposition to Polytheism,—the tendency of the idolatrous heart of man being to multiply objects of divine worship. We will all admit,

for the sake of the argument, that great stress was constantly laid on the unity of God in contradistinction to a plurality of gods, and that the human mind needed, all the time, to be impressed with the Oneness of God, to keep it from idolatry. If this were so, we can imagine that men could have said, Is this One God, himself, in any sense plural? We can see how natural it must have been that oneness should have been the prominent subject of contemplation and thought, and plurality in God, if the idea existed, be a subject of inquiry.

Ages pass away, God reveals himself continually in his providence, and by direct disclosures of himself, till the record is made which is designed to be a sufficient revelation of God to man.

With this completed revelation in our hands, and having reached the conclusion of all which we are to know concerning God in this world, and being in possession of the light which Christian experience for so many centuries has thrown around the subject of interpretation, let us suppose that we find such a concurrent testimony in the world as would establish any discovery or opinion, that *Three* are revealed in the Bible as objects of divine worship.

Now the question might properly be, Are They One? We have found that there is one only living and true God. If by the same kind of proof which establishes this we are led to the belief that there are Three who receive divine worship in Scripture, we cannot but ask, Is the former belief that there is but One God to be

corrected by this completed revelation, and modified? or, Are the Three, who are divinely worshipped, the One God, and is there threefoldness in the divine nature?

It might be the case that the evidences with regard to the Divine Three would be such that if one theory or the other, that is, the Divine Unity or the Trinity, is to give place, the proofs of threefoldness in the Godhead would justify us in saying, On logical grounds the existence of Three divine objects of worship is as defensible as the existence of One God.

To preserve our established and incontrovertible belief that there is but one only living and true God, at the same time that we are compelled to recognize Three divine objects of worship in the New Testament, we resort to the statement that the Three whom the Bible reveals with the same names, attributes, works and worship, are One God. With any supposable impossibility in the case we have nothing to do; for the question as to possibility in such a matter must, in the nature of things, be beyond the compass of the human understanding. Moreover, in believing in One eternal, self-existent God we have consented to that which contradicts our observation and baffles all our powers of thought. It has already been suggested that if one can keep his mind calm on the subject of a Being who never began to be, that is to say, if he refuses to be an atheist, he is precluded, by his admission of incompetency, from deciding what the nature of this incomprehensible Being shall or shall not include in its infinite depths and heights.

In speaking here of "Three," and of "One," it will be observed that the words "Being," "Persons," "Distinctions," "Subsistencies," are not used; for the question at present, with regard to the nature of the One and of the Three, is simply this: Are there Three who have divine names and attributes? Any further question at this point would make confusion, and the inquiry already suggested can be pursued as satisfactorily by following the mathematicians in using letters of the alphabet for unknown quantities, as in using words or names. The writer of that disputed passage, 1 John iii. 7, sets us a good example here. He says: "For there are *three* that bear record in heaven."

As we approach the investigation of this doctrine, it is well to consider that there is nothing more practical than the subject of the Trinity. It involves great and all-important questions as to the death of Christ, and its connection with the forgiveness of sin. There must necessarily be an infinite distance between the death of a created being,—man or angel,—and of one in whom the Maker of all things is incarnate. If such a being is on the cross, between two malefactors, some great purpose is involved. The death of such a being is an event without a parallel. Hence it will be seen that to accept or to reject the doctrine of the Trinity is not mere speculation, and it will readily be believed that stress is laid upon the doctrine, by those who receive it, chiefly because of its relation to the greatest of questions, What must I do to be saved?

For we all agree that great prominence is given in the

Bible to the death of Christ. "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree." He "was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification." "That he by the grace of God should taste death for every man." "He hath made him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."

If he who suffered on the cross was a mere creature, no atonement has been made in the sense of a substitution. Impression was the only object which can be inferred from his death. But if God be incarnate, He who suffers on the cross is fulfilling an object which is beyond a mere impression. What am I in my relation to God as a sinner? How can God forgive sin? What is its penalty? Is Christ a substitute for me? What is the alternative if his substitution be not applied to me? The Scriptures have given the vast majority of their readers grounds, in their view, to believe that retributions are to be without end. This belief gains probability if an atonement has been made by an incarnate God.

So, if the Holy Spirit be not God, but merely "divine influence," this will involve the question whether man must be the subject of a supernatural change, or merely of development and culture, in order to go to heaven. Moreover, great questions relating to the proper object of divine worship are involved here.

If God has revealed himself to us as Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, of course his moral administration over us proceeds with reference to this mode of his existence.

Does God approach man as Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, or not? If He does, and that be his own divinely appointed method, and man does not regard Him in this manner, it cannot be a matter of indifference. Suppose that men could contrive a way by which two thirds of our sun should be perpetually eclipsed. Vegetation, the arts, health, comfort, life, would feel the consequences. So it must be with the moral nature of that man to whom God is but one third of that which He has revealed himself to be. Plainly, too, that man worships a being who is not the God revealed in the Bible.

On the other hand, if Christ be only a creature, and the Holy Ghost a name for divine influences, it must be an injury to worship them. All error is injurious, first or last; "no lie is of the truth;" and error relating to the Supreme Object of divine worship must be of pernicious effect. Indeed, this error is no less than idolatry. Hymns to Christ compose a large part of Christian worship, even from the time of Pliny, who wrote to the Emperor Trajan that the Christians were "accustomed to assemble before light, and to sing hymns to Christ as to God."

But some, who are unwilling to admit the doctrine with all which it implies, dispose of the argument drawn from the evidently superhuman character which the Bible ascribes to Christ, by consenting to lift Him up to an inconceivable height, and place Him in the region of impossible knowledge. Then they are ready to adopt the current language of Scripture, and the bold,

strong phraseology of those who believe in his Deity; and thus they lead some to think that they truly worship Christ. Many, in their charity, are misled by these teachers. They are not willing to place Christ on the throne. They dispose of Him somewhere in the hiding-places of supernaturalism.¹

Between the most exalted creature and Deity there remains an infinite distance. If we should go hence ninety-five millions of miles to the sun, it would make no appreciable difference if we started from a house-top or from the sidewalk, from yonder hill or from the Himalayas. But there is infinitely less difference between that hill and those mountains, than between Christ, if He be an archangel, and Christ if He were in the beginning with God and was God.

No doubt, however, some rely on Christ's mediation as the ground of acceptance with God, who nevertheless do not accept his Deity. As to their acceptance with God, it is not for their fellow men to decide.

¹ This is well illustrated by an anecdote related to me by the clergyman who took part in the conversation to which I shall now refer. An elderly lady, now deceased, a member of his church, was told by her pastor that he feared she was deficient in her views and feelings with regard to the nature of Christ. She protested that she had the most exalted reverence for Christ. He told her that this was not enough. It was essential to her having a faith which accompanies salvation, as the Bible teaches us, that she should receive Christ just as he is proposed to us in the Bible. "Sir," said she, "I do believe that Christ is e'en-a'most God." Expressed in this way, we all see the absurdity of the idea that any exaltation of a creature can make him other than a creature.

Surely their views are often expressed with great devoutness, and with much that is beautiful in their tone and spirit. But we are not warranted to make compromises. While we cannot settle the question of their relation to God, we cannot but inquire how they can believe in a propitiation for sin, if Christ be only a creature; or how they can believe that the death of Christ is any thing more than an exponent, a signal, of peace. A vicarious sacrifice, that is, a sacrifice *vicé*, *in the stead of*, others, is impossible if Christ have only a created nature. Whether they do, or how they can, believe in atoning blood, we will not say. If they say that they do, some questions will arise as to the capability of a creature to atone for the sins of others; especially as the Bible expressly denies that the whole magnificent and costly system of Jewish sacrifices had any efficacy whatever except as types,—for we are told that “it is impossible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sin.” Is it any more possible that the blood of a mere human being should be a propitiation? Besides, do they worship Christ? for He is worshipped in the Bible. If they worship Him, why? and in what way? as people worship Mary? There is but One God; have they more?

The doctrine of the Trinity, therefore, it will be seen, is practical. We say that we find all those essentially divine things ascribed to Christ and to the Holy Ghost which are ascribed to the Father. If we are asked, How do you explain these things consistently with your belief

in One God? we reply, By the doctrine of the Trinity. We are led to it irresistibly, by collecting the plain statements of Scripture in the natural use of our understandings. We must believe in Threë Gods, or that the One God exists with a threefold distinction in his nature. That is called the doctrine of the Trinity. It is simply the theorem which stands at the head of enumerated facts, of which it is the result. Having stated the doctrine, it becomes us to pause; for the Bible leads us not one step beyond. It does not even contain the word Trinity, nor the word Unity. We are clearly warranted by Scripture in saying, that if one will believe in Christ just as the Bible reveals Him in his nature, and in His offices; and in the Holy Ghost, in his nature and offices; and will feel and act toward them as the Bible prescribes, he will certainly be saved, even though he never should have heard, or never should use, the word Trinity. True, he would find it a great convenience in helping him summarily to express his faith; but the knowledge or the use of the term will nowise affect the matter of his acceptance with God.

They err, therefore, who suppose that they must begin their Christian experience by forming to themselves the conception of God as existing in a threefold way. There is no countenance to this in the Scriptures. Things are asserted of Christ and of the Holy Spirit which challenge our implicit faith. Believing them, the Bible is satisfied; all else is the result of induction, and of conventional agreement and use.

There is one objection which many feel in approaching this subject, and with good reason, namely: that the Father is uniformly spoken of as God, and Christ always as "Lord," or as "the Son." "But to us there is but one God, even the Father, — and one Lord Jesus Christ." This passage is sufficient to indicate the point in hand.

Before remarking upon that specific point, it may be well to direct attention to the essentially divine ascription which is made, even here, to Christ: "But to us there is but one God, even the Father, of whom are all things, and we in Him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by Him." He "by whom are all things," we among them, hereby has a relation to us which authorizes worship; for a child's father must receive parental honor; and though that father had a father, that does not weaken the relation of father and son between the parent and the child. So, whatever relation Christ may sustain to Deity, if Christ made us, shall we not worship our Maker? Shall we be told "no; for Christ had a Father"? He who made me is my God; and the Psalm says,—"Let us kneel before the Lord our Maker; for he is our God."

But the point before us is, that the name *God* is specifically applied to the Father in contradistinction to Christ, who is called Lord, or Son. The question, which is very naturally asked, is, "How can it be right to call Christ God, when the name is so distinctly and emphatically given to the Father?"

Has it escaped the notice of the sincere and candid inquirer who puts this important question, that, very frequently, when *God* is spoken of in the New Testament, the words "*Father*," or "*even the Father*," are subjoined? Now why should *God* need any expletive? When God and men, God and angels, are mentioned, we do not read, — "God (even the Father) and men;" "God (the Father) and angels." If Christ be a creature, why is the word *Father* interposed in speaking of God and of Him? It is not a word of affection; the occasions, the tone of thought, do not require or justify the language of endearment; but the word *Father* is evidently added for the sake of definition. But we say again, Does *God* need definition when spoken of, or alluded to, in connection with his creatures? We therefore think that the very common use of the word *Father* in connection with *God*, when Christ is also to be named, is one of the strong incidental proofs of the Trinity, and that the language of inspiration in this way does homage to the divine Son and Spirit when the name of God is used in connection with the name of the Father.

But why, it is asked again, should the name *God* be so often applied by the Apostles to the Father, in the way of preëminent distinction, even if the doctrine of the Trinity be true?

It will be shown in another place that the names *God* and *Lord* are applied in Scripture both to the Father and to the Son. While this is true, it may be observed

that since Christ is both human and divine, and since the Holy Spirit is subordinated, the mind requires an object on which to fix itself in thinking of what we may call original, uncompounded, insubordinated Deity. We have it in the First Person of the Godhead, who is called Father. That there are constitutional reasons in Him, as related to us, for the appropriation of that name, as there are reasons in the Second Person of the Godhead for the name "the Word," seems probable; but who will dogmatize here? It is true that Christian experience serves to confirm that belief.

But in this connection it will be well to notice the significant fact, that the Saviour very seldom, in speaking of *God*, uses that name; but his expression is, "Father." This is most remarkable. The Jews did not so, nor the disciples; it was not, therefore, on the part of Christ, a conformity to prevailing usage. There are between sixty and seventy instances in the Gospels in which the Saviour speaks of the *Father*, or appeals to the *Father*, and the cases are few in which the word *God* is used by Him, unless the word *Father* is subjoined. Twice only, in prayer, does He use the name *God*. We may venture at least to ask whether a mere creature in prayer would not commonly have indulged in the use of the name by which his Creator was known among men? This mode of speaking, on the part of Christ, is most significant, in connection with our belief in the doctrine of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. When the Apostles speak of Christ in connection with

God, it has already been noticed that the words "the Father," or "even the Father," are generally supplied.

We hear it said, Why should we perplex ourselves about this inscrutable subject, which is confessedly beyond the limitations of thought? It should be replied, We ought not to perplex ourselves about it. The Bible does not encourage us to speculate about it, nor about that inscrutable truth, the self-existence of God. The simple truths revealed concerning Christ and the Holy Spirit, all admit, are proper subjects of contemplation; but if, in contemplating them, one is led to worship Christ, and to ascribe divine names, attributes, and works to the Holy Spirit, what shall he do? Shall he call himself, and submit to be called, an idolater? or shall he not justify himself by saying that these Three must be One God? In saying this he enunciates the doctrine of the Trinity.

But, it is said, "How much more simple is the belief in one person in the Godhead! The Trinity is incomprehensible to children; it confuses their minds, and the minds of grown persons. But the idea of one divine Person is perfectly free from confusion."

So the people reasoned under the old system of astronomy. That the earth should go round the sun, filled the mind with amazement by the difficulties and seeming impossibilities which are involved in the theory. They all could understand the rising and setting of sun and stars, but the revolution of a globe, with oceans and rivers, around the sun, and on its axis, was a mystery

with which they preferred not to perplex themselves, and therefore they would not look into Galileo's telescope. Their system certainly had the advantage of being more simple; but a fatal objection lay against it—that it did not account for all the phenomena.

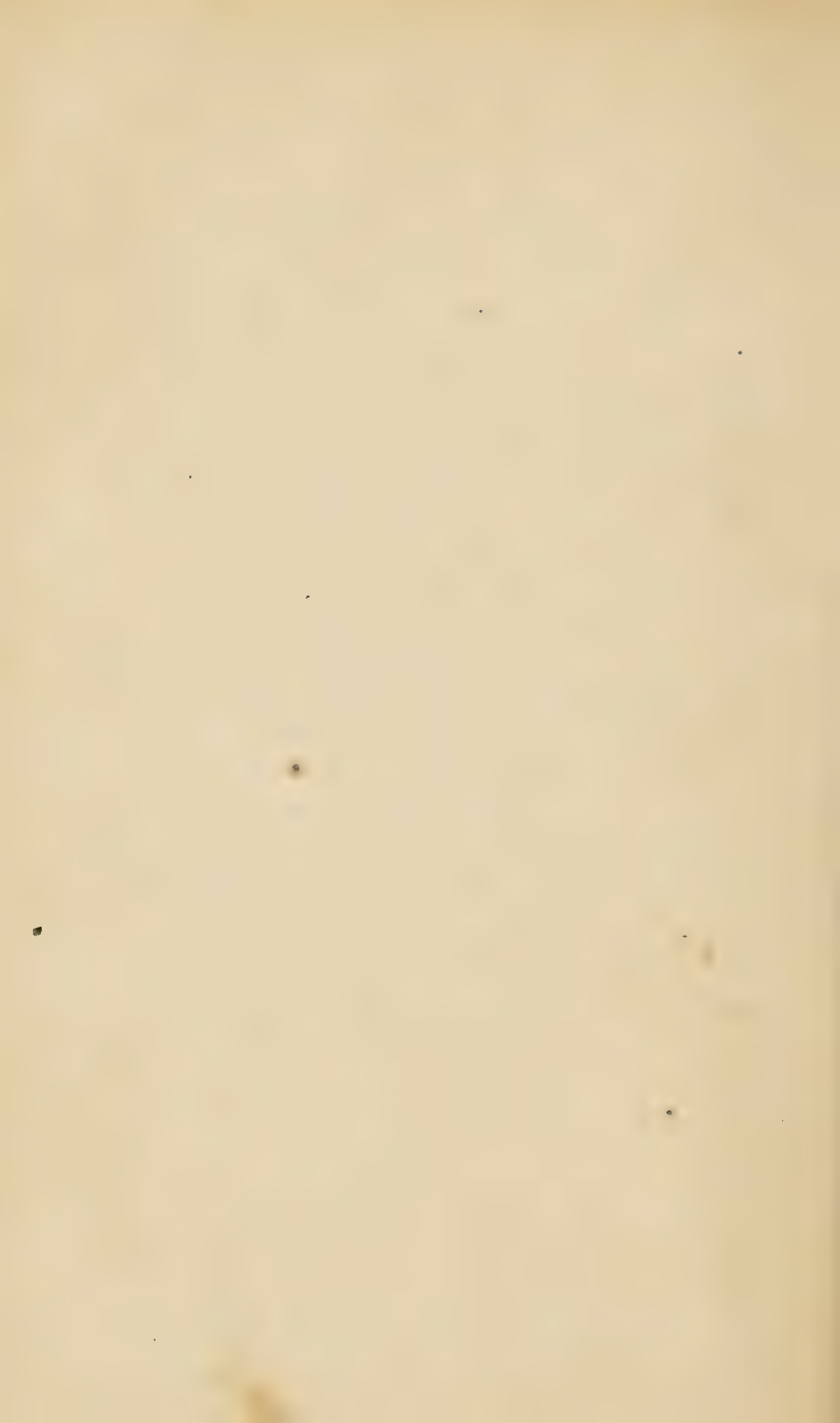
The question on such a subject as this is not as to our wishes or preferences; but we are all children in knowledge with regard to infinite things, and we are to receive and believe with meekness whatever God is pleased to reveal.

We have already admonished ourselves that the first great truth—the existence of an Eternal, Uncreated Being—is a mystery too high for us. If we consent to believe it implicitly, the only question which we can consistently ask with regard to any other subject of revelation, is, Has God declared it? If so, its mystery is no valid reason against our implicit belief.

We are therefore now to inquire, whether the Deity of Christ and of the Holy Ghost are revealed in the Bible. If so, the question will be, Are there three Gods? or, Does the one God exist as Three? Let no one feel that this subject is inimical to his peace; for if it be true, it is for his salvation and joy.

IV.

DEITY OF CHRIST.



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A TRUTH so essential as the Supreme Deity of Christ must be, relating, as it does, to the nature of God and the highest interests of man, it is natural to suppose must lie upon the surface of Revelation, and be easily recognized by the common mind.

The doctrine of the Trinity, we can readily perceive, need not, as a doctrine, be propounded in the same way; for there may not be the same practical necessity for being able to resolve certain facts into a theory, which there is to know the facts in order to apply them to a practical use. This knowledge will promote one's personal piety, and greatly enlarge his conceptions of God and of his moral government, provided he will confine himself to the exercise of simple faith in the mystery without venturing into speculations. For we are so constituted that if the veil be lifted, or if speculation seems to make it transparent, the objects which it was intended to conceal will excite our curiosity to intrude into the things which we have not seen. Without presuming, therefore, to sit in judgment on the proper mode of giving us a revelation concerning God, we can see

that there may be wisdom in not making prominent any theoretical statements concerning the nature of the Godhead. The manifestations which are made of God in acts, names, attributes, and worship, appearing in natural connection with his providence and government, and by the unfolding of his plans with relation to us, are easily understood; at the same time it may be wise and benevolent to keep back the enunciation of any theory in connection with the subject. This seems to be the method chosen by the Author of divine revelation. He places before us the elementary truths or phenomena, without theorizing about them; yet out of these we may, nevertheless, derive a scientific statement, which will be convenient and useful. For example: Suppose that a believer in the Supreme Deity of Christ, and of the Holy Spirit, is charged with worshipping Three Gods. He will find it convenient, in such a case, to propound the doctrine of the Trinity as his chosen alternative to Tritheism. He will say, 'I do believe in the Supreme, equal Deity of the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost; but I also believe them to be one God. Here I pause. I do not believe them to be One in the same sense in which they are Three, nor to be Three in the same sense in which they are One. But knowing that there can be but one living and true God, and finding that there are Three who have divine names, works, attributes, and worship, I am forced to admit the idea of threefoldness in the divine nature.' This is the doctrine of the Trinity.

It is evident that the propriety of this whole conclusion depends upon the proof which there is that there are Three who are thus equally divine. This is now to be the subject of our inquiry. We begin with examining the proofs of the Supreme Deity of our Lord Jesus Christ.

It will be important, at the outset, to see if we have definite and well-grounded views upon the subject of Christ's human nature. We shall soon see the bearing of this upon the subject of his other nature—provided it shall appear that he has another.

THE HUMAN NATURE OF CHRIST.—He was, in all respects, a man, like us, except sin. We fail to find in him an appropriate example, if he were a being of another order, instead of possessing a human soul in a human body. So early as when John wrote his Epistles there were those who denied that Christ really had a human body, declaring, on the contrary, that he was a phantasm. Of course every thing relating to his example, his sympathy with us from similarity of experience, would be destroyed if this were true. The Apostle John meets this error in the first verse of his first Epistle, declaring that Christians had had the evidence of their senses with regard to the person of Christ:—“That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the word of life—declare we unto you.”

He hungered, he ate, he was athirst, he drank, he was

weary, he slept, he suffered bodily pain ; his sweat was, as it were, drops of blood falling from him ; and he shed blood. He died, was buried, rose again. "Behold," said he, "my hands and my feet ; handle me and see, for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have." "Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands, and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side, and be not faithless, but believing." "And they gave him a piece of broiled fish and of a honeycomb ; and he took it and did eat before them."

But he also had a proper human soul. This has been denied by those who have believed that his human body was inhabited by some supernatural being, or by the Deity without a human mind. If this were so, it would separate him entirely from us, and prevent us from feeling that he was "made like unto his brethren." We, therefore, look with interest for the proofs that he had a human soul.

He "increased in wisdom as well as in stature." He prayed ; he had limited knowledge ; he "was tempted in all points as we are ;" and temptation implies limited powers and faculties.

All this is as essential to a proper idea of Christ Jesus as his Godhead. We insist on his complete human nature, with its limitations, and dependence, and susceptibilities to temptation and suffering. We are not driven to an admission of his human nature by proofs which seem to be inconsistent with the idea of his Godhead. We value those proofs of his manhood

no less truly than we value the proofs of his Deity. What were his Godhead without his humanity? It would be merely God in a body, with no community of human interest to draw and to unite us one to the other. Every thing which can be asserted or claimed respecting the man Christ Jesus, we insist upon and earnestly maintain. The manhood of Christ is not for others to assert, while we defend his Godhead; his true manhood is essential to our idea of Him as Mediator, no less than his Godhead. Such passages as these confirm all which has now been said: "Wherefore in all things it behooved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God." "Forasmuch then as the children are flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same." "For verily he took not on him the nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham." "For in that he himself hath suffered, being tempted, he is able also to succor them that are tempted."

But we come now to other declarations in the Bible concerning Christ.

HIS PRE-EXISTENCE. The proof that He existed before He came on earth, is to be found in such passages as these:

"Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day, and he saw it and was glad.

“Then said the Jews unto him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham?”

“Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am.”

The words, “my day,” of course refer to the Saviour’s life on earth, and to his kingdom. Abraham, He says, had joy in the clear, full foresight of “my day.” But with their oblique way of viewing his declarations, the Jews sought to make Him assert, in these words, that his day and that of Abraham were contemporaneous. Christ took advantage of their misconstruction of his words, and He said, “Before Abraham was, I am.” It was not a direct answer to their cavil, but an assertion of a higher truth still than that which first provoked them. ‘You are offended at the idea of Abraham taking pleasure in the full vision of my coming and kingdom. I can tell you that which will surprise you more than this: I am before Abraham.’ The use of the present tense here is wonderful. It destroys at once the possibility of that rendering which some would give to the passage — ‘Before Abraham was, I existed in the divine purpose;’ a truism indeed, and without point in this connection; for this being equally true of many other things, it could not have provoked the Jews to take up stones to cast at Him. “I AM, before Abraham was.” Verbal inspiration, we may say, has an illustration here. Are we not compelled by the passage to admit that Christ here said that of himself

which we cannot explain if he had no existence previous to his life on earth? The same remarkable use of the present tense, when referring to His preëxistence, occurs in these words of Christ: "And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven."

When, or in what manner, Christ came down from heaven, we cannot explain if we do not adopt the belief that He had two natures in one person, and that things are said by Him of himself which are true of only one of those natures. This remark applies with force to that phrase — "the Son of man which is in heaven." Omnipresence is intimated here. The words are among those incidental proofs of divine attributes in Christ which have no less power than some proofs which are more direct and obvious as to their design.

"And now, O Father, glorify thou me with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." No serious attempt, it is believed, has been made to set aside the force of this passage, except by the assertion that "the glory" here spoken of is that which God purposed, "before the world was," to bestow on Christ, so that Christ was able to say of it, while yet future, 'I had it with thee before the world was.' By this mode of interpretation we could destroy a large part of the titles to real estate, and to every kind of property, showing, for example, that as to the property which a man claims to have had, with another, previous to a

certain date, he means only to say that it was the intention of the other to give or to bequeath it to him at a future time. The passage quoted, if understood according to the common interpretation, is full of sublimity — the man Christ Jesus referring to a preëxistent union between the Father and himself in glory, though “Bethlehem” and “the days of Herod the king,” were the place and date of his birth. Truly his name is “Wonderful.”

The following passages may be cited without comment, after what has been said :

“What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before ?”

“I came down from heaven not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me.”

And to conclude with a passage with which we might properly have begun, but which is still reserved for more extended comment in another place, — “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God.” Here again it is necessary to resort to the vague notion of futurity and divine purpose, if one rejects the literal idea that Christ did actually exist in the beginning.

CREATION IS ASCRIBED TO CHRIST. — The following passages on this point are here presented connectedly, with a view to some general remarks upon them as a class of proofs.

Speaking of “the Word,” John says: “All things

were made by him," — and then, to strengthen the assertion, it is repeated in a negative form — "and without him was not any thing made that was made." "In him was life." "For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by him, and for him: and he is before all things, and by him all things consist."

"And thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the works of thine hands."

God is known to us first of all as Creator, Gen. i. 1. Supreme Deity of course is referred to in that verse. Did He create by a substitute? Was a delegated creature acting for Him? Let us try to think of Milton creating *Paradise Lost* by a substitute, Shakespeare creating "*Hamlet*" and the "*Tempest*" by a substitute, Michael Angelo deputing a great artist to produce the Church of St. Peter's in any such way that it could be said that this artist was its author. In St. Paul's Church, London, one reads the inscription referring to Sir Christopher Wren: "*Si monumentum requiris, circumspice,*" — "If you inquire for his monument look about you." This great man did not depute his creative power to another. — Now in the Bible there is no distinction made between the masonry of creation and its conception. "He that built all things is God." Who was it that "spake and it was done?" Who

“commanded and it stood fast”? If the præexistent Word did all this, what was left for God to do, unless “the Word was God”?

It is sometimes attempted to show that if Christ did create all things, God empowered Him to do so, leaving Him still a creature, though inconceivably great. But God asserts that the act of creating is his prerogative: “I am the Lord that maketh all things, that stretcheth forth the heavens alone; that spreadeth abroad the earth by myself.” If Christ made “thrones, dominions, principalities, and powers” (meaning the different orders of the heavenly world), He is, of course, their God; for He who made us is God to us, let who will be God to Him.

It is the constant representation of the Bible, in speaking of Christ as the author of creation, that the Godhead was creating by Jesus Christ in his præexistent nature. This is a strong point in the argument for the Deity of Christ; for if, instead of investing Him with creative powers and deputing the work of creation to Him as a subordinate work, in which it was not necessary for the Godhead to be employed, the Godhead was as really occupied in the work as the Son, while He officially had a chief place in the transaction, it shows that He is in full communion with the Godhead, coöperating, and doing that which the Godhead must also employ itself to accomplish. All those passages, therefore, which speak of God as creating all things by Jesus Christ, instead of showing Christ’s inferiority, illustrate

his Deity; for they show Him to be capable of association and coöperation with Deity in things which God claims as his prerogative.

OMNIPRESENCE AND OMNISCIENCE BELONG TO CHRIST. — The familiar appellation of Christians in the Epistles, is, “those who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.” This is prayer. Christ is therefore the proper object of prayer, “in every place.” Unless he is present, prayer is a mockery of our hopes, and even of our understanding. But, that He may hear prayer which is addressed to Him in every place, at one and the same time, Christ must be omnipresent and omniscient.

“Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.” “Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.”

“All the churches shall know that I am He which searcheth the reins and hearts; and I will give unto every one of you according to your works.”

“The Lord Jesus Christ be with thy spirit.”

These things as truly imply omnipresence and omniscience as though they were spoken of God without distinction of person.

DIVINE NAMES ARE GIVEN TO CHRIST. — “Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; — and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.”

But it is said, Moses was “a god” to Pharaoh. “He called them *gods* unto whom the word of God came;”

and there are "gods many." But how different is that name which is applied to Christ: "The mighty God." "Everlasting Father" is stronger in the original than it appears here. It is, literally, "the Father of Eternity." In the book of Revelation, Christ appropriates names which are confessedly names of Supreme Deity. "I am Alpha and Omega, the First and the Last." These words are four times applied to Christ in this book. Some Trinitarian writers think that the verse (1: 8) is spoken by the Father: "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord [God, *Griesbach*], which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty." If it be so, we, nevertheless, find the Saviour, in the eleventh verse, applying the terms, "the First, and the Last," to himself. These words are used by the Most High, in Isaiah, as his most royal prerogative name. With what propriety it can be used by a creature in speaking of himself, it were vain to inquire.

"But unto the Son He saith, Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever." Some would be glad to read it, "God is thy throne,"—but this is an obvious violation of good taste. "A throne derives its dignity from the character and dominion of the sovereign who sits upon it. To call the Eternal Majesty the throne of a creature, seems little suitable to the reverence which is ever to be maintained towards Him." "In point of taste" it "could never be adopted by any author who had a particle of correct feeling." The words are

a quotation from Ps. xiv. 6, and the alteration of the passage as above suggested is not warranted by any rule of criticism.

“Of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, God blessed forever.” There is no great proof text relating to the Godhead of Christ which has not been the subject of controversy. The passage just quoted has shared this fate, but the proposition to make of the last clause an exclamation, — “God be blessed forever,” — is wholly gratuitous, an unwarrantable assumption.

CHRIST RECEIVES DIVINE WORSHIP. — Baptism, the initiatory rite of the true religion, in which the subject of the rite has three names invoked upon him, is an implied act of divine worship on the part of those who practise it. God, and Christ, and angels, and heaven, and earth, may together be appealed to as witnesses of a transaction or of an oath, without implying equality between them. But when we come to the act of initiation into the belief and practice of religion, and especially when the formula of initiation is made known, and we are commanded to be baptized not simply in the name of God, but in three names, we may naturally ask, — if this very highest expression of divine worship, this primal act of devotement, is not a declaration of Supreme, equal Deity in those into whose names we are baptized, in what way can the idea of supreme Deity be conveyed by any act? It is noticeable that we are not baptized in the name of God and of others, but of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

The name, ~~God~~, does not occur in the formula. The benedictions of the New Testament are prayers, and the recognition of the Son and of the Spirit, in those acts of worship, cannot be explained in consistency with original subordination and inferiority on their part. If we could be free from the influence of controversy on this subject, it is believed that the act of being blessed in the names of Three would naturally lead us to render to them divine and equal regard.

“Thomas saith unto him, My Lord and my God.” The only way in which the act of worship in this passage is set aside is by the supposition, which some have made, that Thomas addressed the Saviour by the name of Lord, then lifted his eyes and hands to heaven and said, My God! This dramatic division of an emotional act is unnatural and forced.

If divine worship was ever performed, or if there are ever circumstances which call for it and justify it, the dying Stephen performed it when he said, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.”

And when we listen with the beloved John to the ascriptions of the heavenly world, we have a testimony, which amounts to demonstration, in the divine honors paid by saints and angels to the Lamb of God. Association on the same throne, and the ascription of the same prerogatives to God and the Lamb, lead us to question ourselves whether we have any such thoughts and feelings toward Christ as would make it consistent to join in those ascriptions.

It is certainly noticeable that the Apostle, in choosing an appellation for all Christians everywhere, should select this: "To all who in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours." For when we read, in Genesis, "Then began men to call upon the name of the Lord," we know that the worship of the true God is intended.

CHRIST IS FINAL JUDGE.—If He is to judge the world by a derived power, without inherent capacity for such a work, the difficulty in believing that omniscience and infinite wisdom, which are divine attributes, are conveyed to Him, would be as great to some minds as the belief in his Godhead is to others.

There is one important sense in which Christ is "appointed" to judge the world, and the reason for it is explicit. "And hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man." The word, "because," here refers to the word "given." The idea is not merely, He is to judge because He is man, but, as man, it was necessary for Him to receive authority to which even his association with the Word did not of itself entitle him. This brings to view the subordination of the complex being, Jesus Christ, God, and man, to which further reference will be made hereafter, when it will appear that the union of a created nature with the divine in the one person of Jesus Christ, makes him, for the time, a subordinate being, and as such he is uniformly represented. On account of the adaptedness of the complex being, Jesus Christ, man and God, to be

the judge of men, it is believed that the passage just quoted refers to this as the ground of his appointment to be our Judge. No doubt there is not only adaptedness, but design, in this arrangement,—to make Him our Judge who took on Him our nature, and whose sympathies with man will give infinite force to his judgment of us; but the ‘giving authority,’ we suppose, was necessary, because manhood was associated with Deity in his person.

If Christ be the proper object of prayer, if He is to be the Judge of the world, and if ‘Deity’ be not then recognized, and its fulness is not in Him, we may well ask, What is left for God to do? To what region of unapproachable silence, wrapt in the contemplative abstraction of the Stoic’s God, has He retired? What prerogative of Deity is left, if a derived being is judge of the human race?

SABELLIANISM.—Sabellius explains all these mysteries by saying that there is no personal distinction of Father and Son in the Godhead, but that the Father acts in and through the human nature of Jesus, who is mere man.

This is positively denied by the Apostle John. “The Word was with God, and the Word was God.” One cannot be “with” himself. This simple passage is a confutation of Sabellianism, establishing the doctrine of a personal distinction in the Godhead. The idea is repeated: “the same was in the beginning with God.” Moreover, do we not hear the two addressing one the

other? "And now, O Father, glorify thou me with the glory which I had with thee before the world was," — in which that beautiful law is seen which we are conscious of as immortal yet mortal beings, by which we continually say things of ourselves and to one another which are true of only one part of that being, *I*. This appears again in the address of the Father to the Son: "But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever." And again, "Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the works of thine hands."

To all this it will be said, Then it follows that there are "Two" in the Godhead. — Yes, there are "Three." — Three — what? — We infer from the revealed statements of the New Testament that in the Godhead there are Three who may properly use the personal pronouns, *I*, *Thou*, and *He*, in addressing, or in speaking of, one another.

Then there must be three consciousnesses — three wills; — if so, how can there be one God?

A witness is not properly held to explain the things of which he testifies. We have only set forth the declarations of the Bible. This is that of which the Apostle speaks: "And without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness." We venture no explanation. There is no similitude with which we can compare it. He who dares to name any thing in the heavens or earth as bearing any resemblance to this mystery, steps into a depth where reason is soon drowned. But this

part of the subject has been sufficiently remarked upon in the lecture on the Trinity.

THE SAVIOUR'S SUPPOSED CONFESSION OF INFERIORITY.—It has been shown in the preceding pages that the union of a created nature with the Word reduces the complex being to a subordinate condition.

Let us suppose that a complete human nature is taken into personal union with the divine nature, both of them to retain their identity.

The human nature will still be conscious of limited knowledge, of finite faculties, both of body and mind,—of weariness, and hunger, and thirst; it will feel dependence, which will express itself in prayer.

If the object in the union between the two natures, as to its effect on us, is mediatorial, drawing us to God, the predominating impression must be made by the human nature. Hence it is said—there is “one Mediator, the *man* Christ Jesus.” For, if the divine nature should chiefly manifest itself, it would have the effect which the top of Sinai had on the elders of Israel. The human nature must guard us against those flashes of the superior nature which would terrify and repel us.

Subordination in the one person with the two natures, therefore, being the object of the incarnation, we must look for manifestations appropriate to the subordinate condition. There are senses in which the whole complex person, divine and human, can say things of itself which, originally, are true of one nature only, in that

person, but which are also true of Him in his whole compound existence. All those declarations, on his part, of inferiority, are instances of most unwarrantable egotism, they are presumption, unless this be true. For, we cannot think of one who is a mere created being, however exalted, daring to bring himself and God into comparison, and saying, "My Father is greater than I." Those words are among the strongest presumptive evidences of a divine nature in Christ, of a nature clad in human flesh and subordinated, so as to need assertions of its association with the Godhead in order to excite our confidence and trust.

We have already considered the necessity of the Messiah's receiving "authority to execute judgment" in consequence of his being man. It is not for us to demur at this arrangement. We find it expressly declared; and we might well consider which is the greater difficulty of the two, — to believe that a divine and human being can act subordinately, or, that a mere human being, or one less than omniscient, can judge the universal race of men, search the heart, try the reins, and give to every man according to his works.

But it was necessary that the human part in the Saviour should exert its influence upon us to a degree which would be a veil over the divine attributes without wholly concealing them. If we accept this, we shall be furnished with an answer to the objection that we seem to evade the arguments against the Deity of Christ, derived from human acts, and declarations of

inferiority on his part, by referring those things to his human nature. For why should we not do so? If He be, as we say, two natures in one person, and those two natures act and speak in ways appropriate to them, of course some things must be said and done by one nature, and must be true of one nature, which can be explained only in that way. We need this privilege as much in accounting for things in Christ which imply supreme Deity, as well as those which prove his human nature to be unmingled with the Godhead. We therefore are at no loss to understand his complaint when crucified, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!" If he be completely, and without confusion of attributes, a man, we understand this. If He be also omnipresent, we understand Him when He says, "And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but He that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven."

But into the connection and the fellowship of the Three we do not enter, even in fancy; we only walk thoughtfully on the shore of this ocean, and gather such things as come to land.

THE WORD "TRINITY."—There is no such word in the Bible as "Unity," nor "Omniscience," nor "Perseverance," nor "Public Worship," nor "Installation," nor a score of other words and conventional terms to express things which are nevertheless conveyed to us in the Bible.

Some who are dissatisfied with their religious condition, and who seek further light with regard to evangelical doctrines, begin at once with attempts to comprehend the doctrine of the Trinity. They search the Bible for its proofs; they read books of controversy; they have an impression that it is required of them to believe that Three can be One and One Three, and that this is in some way necessarily connected with their salvation.

Such is not the proper way of approaching this subject. The only thing for us sinners to learn at first, is, what way God has appointed for the pardon of sin. If God is at peace with us, all is well; but the Bible nowhere enjoins that in order to this we must believe a theorem relating to the Divine existence. We shall certainly come to believe it, in consequence of believing other things; but we are not to regard it as preliminary to our acceptance with God.

One who seeks to know what he must do to be saved, soon finds that the greatest prominence is given in the Bible to the sufferings and death of Christ, as the ground of pardon. He perceives that we, as sinners, are declared to be without help or hope; "for by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified." If obedience, past, present, and future, is not the ground of acceptance with God; if regrets, mental anguish, and even repentance and good purposes, are not sufficient to reconcile us with God, how can God be just and justify a sinner? The answer appears, in one form or another, on every page of the New Testament. "Be-

hold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world." "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree." "When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life." "To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." "Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us unto God by thy blood."

Such passages, representing the general tenor of Scripture on this subject, make him feel that Jesus Christ, by his sufferings and death, is a substitute for him—the righteousness of Christ being appointed for his justification, the penalty of the law of God being satisfied by his cross, and provision being made for the restoration of the soul to holiness by the Redeemer's mediation.

In the humbled and submissive state of mind which now ensues, one is ready to receive any thing which is clearly revealed; and not only so, he is now predisposed to have exalted views and feelings with regard to the Saviour of the world. For he has begun to look to Him for salvation; he finds himself praying to Him, and that before he had settled in his own mind the consistency of doing so. He prays to Christ, he commits his soul to Him, to be saved. And now the declarations of the Bible concerning the Godhead of Christ

are received without cavil. Indeed they are welcomed as a support to that all-important step which the soul has felt compelled to take, in its extremity, under the consciousness of sin. We must not make our feelings a rule for revelation; but yet the Bible is adapted to Christian experience, was made to develop and sustain it, and those who judge the Bible by their natural instincts should not object if we judge of it also by our experience and knowledge of our spiritual necessities. Straightway, passages of Scripture which declare the supreme Deity of our Lord appear to be luminous, and they crowd thick and fast upon the attention, till, ere he is aware, the believer finds himself established in the practice of giving divine worship to his Redeemer.

Ask him now as to the consistency of having two divine objects of worship, and how he can defend himself against the charge of idolatry. He will say that he has not speculated on the subject, that his heart has run ahead of his logic, that he finds divine names, works, attributes, and worship given to Christ and to the Father, and that he is content to do the same. "Then," you say to him, "you have come to believe in the doctrine of the Trinity, the 'dogma' which used to offend you, and which you so long declared to be 'an invention of the fourth century,' and nowhere revealed in the Bible." "It is even so," he will reply, "but I had little expectation of arriving at a belief in the doctrine of the Trinity when I began; all that I sought for was to get my sins forgiven, and my heart changed, through

a divine Redeemer, and a divine Sanctifier, in whose names, with that of the Father, I have been baptized; but as to being able to explain the consistency of Three in One and One in Three, I am as much in the dark as ever, knowing only this, that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, are each represented to me with divine attributes, and still that there is one only living and true God.”

It would seem that any one who is at all candid would agree in this, that if it could but be true that we have such a Saviour as we have now set forth, God made flesh, a complete, perfect man, made like unto his brethren, who, at the same time that he is God, has all the sympathies of man, — a personal friend, touched with the feeling of our infirmities, — and yet omnipresent, so that we can always have immediate access to Him, and omnipotent, so that He is able to save to the uttermost, it would be a provision wonderfully adapted to our wants, to be received with thankfulness and praise.

Viewing the subject in the light of reason alone, we find it easier to believe in the doctrine of the Trinity, than to explain away the numerous passages which ascribe divine attributes to Christ. In adopting the doctrine of the Trinity, we admit a truth which lies beyond the limits of our knowledge, and we feel absolved from any responsibility of adjusting it to what we call reason. But that a mere creature should be said to have divine attributes, names, works, and worship, is something which lies within the province of our minds; it contradicts all that we have

otherwise learned; but in order to decide that there can be no plurality in unity in the divine nature, we must have studied beyond any branches of knowledge which we have yet learned. At the same time it does not contradict previous experience, like the ascription of divine attributes to a creature. For we know that unity is so far from being inconsistent with plurality, that it frequently implies it. For example, if we speak of the unity of a discourse, it implies parts. We never speak of the unity of a thought. Unity of effort always implies combination; indeed we ourselves are instances of plurality in unity. Until one can explain the philosophy of his bodily motions, and how spirit can vitalize matter, and be practically one with it, a becoming modesty will lead him to be silent with regard to the mysteries of the divine nature.

We are not to feel it necessary that we should place Christ between us and the Father, and pray Christ to pray the Father. Praying through Christ does not thus mean placing them in a line and passing through one to the other. Praying through Christ means, first of all, praying with reference to his meritorious work; asking for blessings on the ground of his sufferings and death. Still, in great distress, or in conscious weakness and unworthiness, when the thought of the Infinite God oppresses the mind, it is a relief, and it is no doubt in accordance with one great object in the incarnation, thus to supplicate Christ as literally, and in person, mediating between us and God. When we pray specially to Christ, or to the Holy Spirit, as long as we feel that the supply

of our wants is peculiarly within the province of the divine offices ascribed severally to them, we but fulfil the benevolent intention in revealing them to us as objects of faith and love.)

This, however, is made the subject of much cavil. It is said by some who do not consider the explanations just made, "You pray to one that he will pray to another to send a third;" — in all which, however, there is not the least practical difficulty. But in order to understand it, there must have been a Christian experience on the subject. The Father is represented as occupying a supreme place and relation, which is not at all subordinated; but the Son is made subordinate "for the suffering of death," and the Holy Spirit acts in subordination to the two, and yet possesses all divine attributes, as we shall proceed to consider; and we can therefore see that it is consistent with divine attributes in the Three that the Saviour should say, "I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter."

We only wonder that so much is plain on this mysterious subject. The purpose of the Bible does not seem to be to make this subject understood by us, but to reveal the way to be saved; in doing which the Godhead of the Son and of the Holy Ghost comes to view, not for the purpose of disclosing that mystery, but to show us the way to be saved. No more appears to be revealed than is necessary to lay the foundation for faith in the appointed method of salvation; but even these things "the angels desire to look into."

“But is not the Lord’s prayer an all-sufficient guide to devotion, both as to manner and spirit?” We may reply, How did dying Stephen pray? How do the redeemed in heaven worship? The sermon on the Mount cannot be superseded, nor the Lord’s prayer be forgotten, but Christ said to his disciples, “I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit, when he the Spirit of Truth, is come, he shall lead you unto all truth.” “He shall glorify me; for he shall take the things which are mine and shall show them unto you.” No one part of the teachings of Christ is intended to disclose a whole system. The parable of the prodigal son says nothing about the doctrine of the resurrection; and the parable of the Good Samaritan makes no allusion to the Lord’s Supper. Progress in the development of the Christian religion is implied by Christ in several passages in his last discourse to his disciples.

“But how could Christ be ignorant and yet omniscient at the same time?”

We answer, He sat, wearied and thirsty, on a well; and yet, “before Him shall be gathered all nations.” He slept on a pillow in a ship, and then stood on the deck and said to the winds and waves, Peace, be still. He constantly said and did things as man, and then as God. There is infinite beauty to us in this, and no difficulty, because we accept the doctrine of his having “a true body and a reasonable soul,” which were not mingled with the indwelling Word.

“But, if this subject be so important, why does it need so much discussion and enforcement?” It is owing to our unbelief. Why should we need any further argument to prove that Christ is God, after reading the first verses of John’s Gospel?

“But how easy it would have been to have prevented all doubt and difficulty on this subject by a simple declaration, on the part of Christ, that there are three persons in one God.”

There would probably have been as much discussion and as much unbelief then as now. Belief is not in proportion to evidence, where the feelings are enlisted. After seeing Christ open the eyes of one born blind, the Jews came and said, “How long dost thou make us to doubt? If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly.” The objection to the Deity of Christ lies in the human heart; for we always see that when one is convinced of his lost state as a sinner, he accepts Christ as an atoning Saviour, and then he accepts the doctrine of the Trinity, without being any better able to explain it than before.

V.

DEITY OF CHRIST.

CONTINUED.

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V.

DEITY OF CHRIST—CONTINUED.

RECAPITULATION.—EXPLANATIONS.

THERE are three things which we find revealed, and these make a “Doctrine of the Trinity.” These are the Supreme Deity of Christ, and the Supreme Deity of the Holy Ghost, in connection with the Supreme Deity of the Father. The doctrine of the Trinity is only a statement of the way in which we reconcile these three things with the doctrine of One God. If, therefore, we are asked what we mean by this doctrine, we say, We find that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are revealed to be equal in divine attributes, and that they constitute One God. We may adopt this inductive mode of statement—reasoning from the phenomena to the theory; or, we may use the analytical mode of statement, and say, We believe that the One God has in his nature a threefold distinction, designated by the names, Father, Word, and Spirit.

We shall agree that God alone is the proper judge as to the mode in which He will make a revela-

tion. Should He reveal an essential truth in parables only, to try the faith of men and to develop their secret character, this would be in accordance with the avowed purpose of the Great Teacher in some of his public instructions.

Now it should be borne in mind that the only essential things, so far as we are concerned with them, in the Trinity, are the equal Deity of Jesus Christ and of the Holy Spirit and of the Father. Are these severally made plain? If they are, is there any thing else, in connection with them, and with the nature of the Godhead, made known to us for the obedience of faith? Do we find explanations in the Bible as to the consistency of these things with the Unity of God? Or, are certain elementary things made plain, with no attempt to form them into a system? The latter would certainly have a parallelism in the entire absence, in the opening of the Bible and elsewhere, of the least attempt to propound a theory respecting that great and first truth, the existence of an eternal, uncreated God. If God sees fit to adopt this indirect method of revealing the truth of his self-existence, we are not to wonder if the same method is observed in further disclosures relating to his nature.

Suppose that we should say, "The doctrine of the Copernican system of astronomy is nowhere expressed on the firmament. I have searched from pole to pole, and the word *Copernican* is not suggested by star nor constellation." We reply, Philosophers have gathered together the phenomena of the heavens and earth, and

we are all as confident that the "Copernican" theory is true as though the doctrine were printed in stars on the sky.

We are agreed as to the complete *Manhood of Christ*. No human being has all the attributes of man more entirely than Christ. Whatever else Christ is, therefore, he is, in all respects, a man, with "a true body and a reasonable soul."

Creation is ascribed to Him, and *Eternity*.

Names are given to Christ which are the prerogatives of Deity.

He is *Omnipresent*. He is an object of *Divine Worship*.

He is the Judge of the World.—What propriety or what necessity there could be in the interposing of a creature between us and God, in that hour and in that transaction which, of all, seem indispensably to require the special presence and immediate agency of the Most High, can never be satisfactorily explained. That Christ is to be the final Judge, presiding in person in the final trial of the race, is as clearly and positively declared as words can assert it. We are compelled to believe it; but, unless we also believe in the supreme Deity of Christ, He seems to be in the way of that supreme honor which we feel that we should render to the Father. In this connection it will be pertinent to say, that an intelligent friend, who had recently become a believer in the evangelical system, declared that formerly he "never knew what to do with Christ." The Scriptures "made too much of Him" for

his faith. The Saviour was in the way of his rendering supreme and undivided homage to the Father. He was willing to receive Christ as the messenger of God, as a creature, and to give him honor; but when creation is ascribed to Him, and eternity, and acts of divine worship, and He is declared to be the final Judge, it constantly interfered with the honor which he supposed belonged only to God.

One of these theories must inevitably be true, if we apply the common rules of interpretation to the declarations of Scripture concerning Christ, namely:—

1. Christ is either a mere human being in whom Deity resides and operates, — which is Sabellianism; or, 2. Christ is an exalted superhuman being, with delegated power, in connection with human nature, — which is Arianism; or, 3. Christ is the Word made flesh, with a distinctive personality, having all the attributes of Deity; and since there is but one God, this one God exists in a plural manner, Jesus Christ being one of the coequal “persons” (for want of a better and indeed of any suitable word) in the Godhead. This is Trinitarianism.

But we have already seen that Sabellianism, or the theory that Christ is a mere human being, with Deity specially residing in him and operating through him, seems to be confuted by the apostle John in the first utterances of his Gospel. For, whoever it was that dwelt in Christ, it was One who was “with God.” “The Word was with God.” If “with God,” there must, of

necessity, have been a distinction of some kind and degree between them. This is fatal to Sabellianism, that is, to the idea that Deity inhabited and influenced Christ, as He influenced the prophets; or as the sun, or as the vegetating earth are inhabited by the power of God. Moreover, we hear Christ addressing the Father thus: "And now, O Father, glorify thou me with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." It was not the Father, then, who inhabited the person of the Saviour; for there is here an appeal to the Father by Him who dwells in Christ, — an appeal on the part of the whole person, Jesus Christ, human and divine, without any distinction. This "person" is subordinated, because in part human; the divine nature in Him using the human powers and faculties, and addressing the Father as the acknowledged, acting, Supreme Deity, to whom this complex being, the God-man, was and is, for the time, subordinate. Nor is it in conflict with what has now been said in opposition to Sabellianism, that Christ declares, "The Father that dwelleth in me, He doeth the works." For this was addressed to the Jews on their own premises, they demanding evidence that Christ was from God, and Christ asserting the general truth that the Father and He were united in his mission. It was this point only which was then in controversy between them, — whether He were an authorized messenger from God. In declaring this, Christ says things which may imply inferiority; whereas, taken in connection with his sole object in saying them, they are assertions of mutual rela-

tionship and inseparableness. "The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do," — this, and other passages to the like effect, all assert union of purpose between himself and the Father, and do not refer at all to relative rank. And yet equality with the Father is plainly asserted when He says, in this connection, — "For what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise."

If Christ were inhabited by Deity, merely, as we use the expression, He being conscious of it, as He certainly was conscious of being something besides a mere man, his prayers, we may conceive, would not have gone out of himself; they would have been soliloquies, conferences within his own person, and nothing like that which we have in the passage where it is said, "These words spake Jesus, and *lifted up his eyes to heaven* and said, Father," etc. But it is difficult for many to conceive of any propriety in his praying to the Father at all, if He himself were conscious of being, in one of his two natures, equal with God. But this is explained when we consider that, to be of any use to us as Mediator, this divine and human being must be in a subordinated condition, must act as one who, whatever He was originally, "was made flesh and dwelt among us." And as to the incongruity of his praying, if divine, we may reply, How is it any more congruous for Him, a man, to say, "Before Abraham was I am;" — "the glory which I had with Thee before the world was;" — "he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven;" — "what and if

ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before?"

The favorite theory of those who do not receive the supreme Deity of Christ is, that he is a delegated being, with power and authority immeasurably above all creatures in heaven and on earth.

One thing which is delegated to him, then, is the making of all things. But this is the prerogative of God, so far as the Bible reveals to us any essential attributes of Deity. "Thus saith the Lord, thy Redeemer, and he that formed thee from the womb, I am the Lord, that maketh all things; that stretcheth forth the heavens alone; that spreadeth abroad the earth by myself." Delegated creatorship makes two Gods for us to worship. Who made us? The answer of some must be, God delegated and empowered Jesus Christ to create me. Then whom do you worship? The answer, interpreted, would be, I worship the Being who employed a creature to create me.

Congress sends an order to an artist in Italy for a statue. They give directions as to the model, from what portrait the features shall be copied; the costume, the attitude, the whole idea in the representation, are prescribed. We visit the statue when it is completed, and ask who made it. It would be disrespectful to us if one should say, "The Congress of the United States; the artist was only their agent, with delegated power." But the artist chose that marble when it was 'in the lowest parts of the earth,' and brought the shape and lineaments

of the statue into existence, ‘which in continuance were fashioned when as yet there was none of them;’ his genius was employed upon it; this work of art is truly his creation. Now if the soul be an actual creation, and not a mere development of matter, who created it? Not merely who superintended the laws of nature to see that they gave existence to the soul, — but, Who created the soul out of nothing? We read concerning Christ, “By him were all things created, both which are in heaven, and which are in earth;” — “and he is before all things, and by him do all things consist.”

• INCIDENTAL PROOFS OF THE SAVIOUR’S DEITY. — Some of these (and they are scattered profusely in the Bible) are among the strongest arguments. These few will lead the reader to think of others.

1. “*Took on him the form of a servant.*” It is well authenticated, to the writer’s personal knowledge, that not long since a man heard a fellow-traveller, a Christian, talking in his sleep and reasoning as follows: All creatures are servants of God. The archangel, or, if there be a creature above him, he, is still a servant. Now if Christ “*took on him*” the form of a servant, it follows that he is not a creature; and therefore He is God.

2. “*I go to prepare a place for you; and if I go, I will come again and receive you to myself, that where I am, there ye may be also.*”

To feel the force of this, we have only to imagine Elijah saying to the sons of the prophets just before his translation, or Paul to the elders of Ephesus, “Where

I am there ye may be also;" implying that heaven would consist in being with him.

3. "*Having a desire to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better.*" We cannot reconcile it with propriety that the inspired Apostle should make the company of a creature synonymous with heaven.

4. "*Ye believe in God; believe also in me.*" This is irreverential if there be not an equality between the two.

5. "*I and my Father are one.*" Of course they were one in plan and action, and they were in sympathy with each other. If this were all which Christ implied, it was only the claim which Christ had continually made, and it was no provocation to stone him, any more than were the other things which he had just said. But the Jews interpreted it as the claim of a man to be equal with God.

6. "*I will not blot out his name out of the book of life.*" There is here a tone of sovereignty in the disposal of our destinies for eternity, which is unsuitable for a creature to assume.

7. "*If a man love me he will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him and make our abode with him.*" Such association of one's self with God is fearfully arrogant in a creature.

8. "*Glorify me with thine own self.*" We might say to him if he were only a creature, 'Thou hast asked a hard thing.' In what way God can glorify a creature with his 'own self,' no one can explain. The meaning appears when Christ adds,

9. “*With the glory which I had with thee before the world was.*”

10. “*If ye loved me, ye would rejoice because I said, I go unto the Father; for my Father is greater than I.*” Let us suppose Paul telling Timothy, ‘I am now ready to be offered; if you loved me you would rejoice that I am going to God; for God is greater than I.’ The simple act of comparing himself with God shows that in Christ there is proper ground for such comparison, which surely cannot be said of a creature. But the Saviour, having excited the confidence of his disciples even to the bound of adoration, though acting as God-man in subordination to the Father, might suitably raise their hopes and joy by intimating that this subordination was now to be succeeded by his personal appearance before Him, and by visible union with Him, to whom in his subordinate capacity He had taken upon Him “the form of a servant.”

11. “*The Lord Jesus Christ be with thy spirit.*” If such a prayer may be made for one man, it may be for many; and if Christ can be with our spirits, he is omnipresent.

12. “*No man knoweth the Son, but the Father.*” Some say that there is no mystery in Christ’s nature. But it seems that God only knows who He is. We are told, indeed, that the “Word was God,” yet who but God can know this mystery?

13. “*They commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed.*” This refers to Christ, and it is an act of worship.

14. "*That the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you and ye in him, according to the grace of our God and of the Lord Jesus Christ.*" Such perfect blending of God and Christ is consistent only with the idea of their equality.

15. The last words of the Bible are, "*The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.*" True, these words were written merely at the close of the book of Revelation. But still, did not God design that this should be the last book of the Bible?

With such incidental proofs of the Deity of Christ it would be easy to fill many pages.—Let us now refer again to a class of passages already mentioned which are uniformly relied upon as proofs of Christ's original inferiority to the Father:—"I can of mine own self do nothing." "The works which I do, I do not of myself. The Father, that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works." "The Son can do nothing of himself, but whatsoever he seeth the Father do."

It has already been shown, but it will not be superfluous to say again, that these passages merely assert union of purpose between Christ and the Father, and that they are addressed to the cavil of the Jews that Christ was not sent from God. It will be found on examination that assertions by the Saviour of his inferiority were not called for in such connections, and that they would have been out of place. The claim to be established was, perfect consent and union between the Father and the Messiah. These passages establish that claim.

But if there be one passage which, more than another, is generally relied on to disprove the Deity of Christ, it is this: "For there is one God, and one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus."

The argument which this text would logically suggest, if any, is this, that Christ is not God because He is here called man in distinction from the one God. The evident design, it is said, is to make an unquestionable distinction between Deity and that human person, Jesus.

But it being supposed that Paul never dreamed that Christ was more than human, why should he take such pains to assert a palpable truism, namely, that there is only one God, and that Christ is only a man, and not God, though employed in a mediatorial office?

The passage thus literally taken would prove that "the man Christ Jesus" is only a man. Is this the opinion of the objector? It would be a rare thing to find, even at the present day, a professed Christian who believes so little. Hence, the term, 'the man Christ Jesus,' is used to designate *a person*, irrespective of the nature, or natures, in that person. Though "in the beginning with God," and though He "was God," still it is proper to speak of Him as "the man Christ Jesus," for such He was, though this was not all; and we have seen that He was continually saying things of himself which were true of only one of his natures, or which could be true only on the supposition that He had more natures than one.

There is a passage which is an exact parallel to this, which, while it makes the same distinction as here, between the one God and the Lord Jesus Christ, contains a perfect proof of his Creatorship. "But to us there is one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him, and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him." Would it make any difference in the impression of this passage upon our minds if the terms "of whom" and "in Him" were applied to Christ, and if the terms "by whom" and "by Him" were applied to God instead of Christ? Surely not. If "all things" are "by" Jesus Christ, "and we by Him," we cannot distinguish between the honor due to Him and to the Father.

The following questions have been actually put, and in a candid manner, and they are worthy of a candid answer. "Take the following passage,—'even as I also overcame and am set down with my Father on his throne.' Who says this?—the human nature or the divine? or both?" Answer: Both. "How, then, can this complex being, including one nature that was equal with God, own a father?" Answer: It certainly appears to be so, in numerous passages. For example:—"and the Word was with God, and the Word was God;"—"and the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."

How will the candid inquirer account for this? The inspired writer here unquestionably speaks of a complex

being, "the Word," who "was God," "made flesh," as "the only begotten of the Father." We might repeat his own question: Is this said of the human nature, or of the divine, or of both? The answer must be, Of both. Now, if there be any controversy on the point, it must be with the author of the first chapter of John.

Some explain this by the doctrine of "eternal generation," which teaches that from eternity there was that in the divine relation between the "Father" and "the Word" which laid a foundation for the names Father and Son — there being "a derivation," or "procession," which was, however, perfectly consistent with a coëternity, and in all respects an equality. Hence "the Word of God" could always properly use the term "Father," in relation to the Godhead.

Others are better satisfied with the belief that the term "Son" as applied to Christ relates only to his Messiahship. "I will declare the decree: Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten Thee." They suppose that it is consistent for the complex being, the Word and the man Christ Jesus, to be called "the Son of God," and for Him to call God, "Father," on the principle that things may be said by one having a compound nature, which are true in reference only to one part of that nature.

Again: "Did Christ ever speak of a double consciousness?" It appears not; nor did He ever say a word about the nature of the mystery which was in Him. It is in vain for us to inquire why this was so.

We may also wonder, for example, that no more is said by the man Christ Jesus, as a son, respecting his mother. We find Him continually saying things which imply a knowledge on his part of the two natures within himself. "I came down from heaven." "The glory which I had with thee before the world was." "Thou lovedst me from the foundation of the world." "Before Abraham was, I am."

It is asked, "If the old theory of the Atonement were given up, would not people generally reject the doctrine of the Trinity and the Deity of Christ?"

A large part of those who come to believe in these doctrines are led to their belief by first perceiving that the atoning blood of Christ is appointed as the only ground of pardon. Men generally try every other method of being reconciled to God before they embrace this, which perfectly humbles pride, and makes the sinner feel that his salvation is wholly of grace. His faith in Christ as an atoning Saviour leads him to the logical conclusion that Christ must be more than a creature in order to atone for sin. But the will being subdued, and pride being humbled, in accepting pardon through a crucified Redeemer, the mind is prepared to receive, without cavil, those plain and powerful declarations in the New Testament respecting the Deity of Christ. They coincide with the experience and wants of the soul. But still, as there are very many who have no practical faith in the atonement, and yet are firm believers in the Deity of Christ, it cannot properly be said that the belief in the atone-

ment is the chief cause of a prevalent belief in the doctrines of the Trinity, and of the Deity of Christ. They shine by their own light, though they belong to a constellation.

To a sincere inquirer who is troubled with difficulties on this subject, the following counsels may be useful:—

1. Do not hesitate to think of Christ, at any time, either as God, or as man, without making up in your mind, as it were, the complement of his natures. It is exceedingly profitable, at times, to contemplate Him only as man; nay, to look into the manger at Bethlehem and view Him only as a babe. Cowper says of Him, —

“As much, when in the manger laid
Almighty ruler of the sky,
As when the six days works he made
Filled all the morning stars with joy.”

But, without trying to blend the two things as due to your reverence for Him, indulge in the contemplation of the child Jesus, the man of sorrows, the weary, solitary, despised, suffering man of Nazareth; pray to Him as such; take full delight in his being made like unto his brethren. Then you may also think of Him, for so He is represented in the Bible, as Creator, Omnipotent, Omnipresent, Final Judge. Then both of his natures, his whole being as God-man, will sometimes appear to your thoughts without confusion, blending as they do in the New Testament, and as they are represented as doing when it is said, by Bishop Heber, —

“ Angels adore Him in slumbers reclining,
Maker, and Monarch, and Saviour of all.”

2. Do not perplex yourself with attempts to conceive of Three in One. Resort to this doctrine as the way of accounting for the things which are said in the Bible respecting the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Be not afraid of derogating from the honor due to the Son and the Spirit by calling the Father, in a præminent manner, GOD; for so it is evidently intended that we should do, it being necessary that we should at times conceive of Deity separated from all subordination. The Father occupies that relation to the mind of the worshipper; we may call Him God, at the same time that we may be praying to the Saviour and to the Holy Spirit.

So a star which we sail by, or which is for any reason a sign to us, appears to be one object, though we may know it to be a triple star, which at times we rejoice to view in its multiplicity and harmony; yet, when it beams upon us suddenly as a heavenly body, we are not exercised with any arithmetical effort before we enjoy the sight. Thus the mind and heart may receive the idea of God without breaking it up by any recollection of plurality; again, the thought of society in the Godhead is a source of inexpressible pleasure; and again, we find ourselves praying exclusively to the Holy Spirit for things which are peculiarly appropriate to Him, and to the Saviour for things which relate especially to Christ; and then to the Father, either as God without distinction of

persons, or in view of the paternal character which we especially associate with Him.

All that has been said may well be brought to a conclusion by the help of a figure used by Dr. Owen, in his "Glory of Christ." In speaking of the passage "— by him (Christ) to reconcile all things unto himself— whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven," he represents Christ in his complex natures as a node, or knot, which gathers up, unites, and holds together, all things in heaven and earth. "That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might *gather together in one* all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth, even in him."

VI.

DEITY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

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ALL the proofs necessary to establish personality in any instance whatever can be brought to prove that the Holy Spirit is a person.

It is a curious and interesting grammatical fact, apart from the truth suggested by it, that masculine pronouns are employed in connection with the name, *Holy Spirit*, the name itself being neuter. This is an exception to the law of language. It is true that we apply masculine and feminine pronouns to neuter or inanimate objects in a poetical way, calling the sun *him*, and a ship *her*; but where there is no opportunity or occasion for such a metaphorical use of language, and where usage has not affixed a masculine or feminine appellation to a thing, the laws of speech forbid the use of masculine or feminine relatives with a neuter noun.

It is singular, then, that the neuter name of the Holy Spirit should have acquired masculine relatives. It looks as though the personality of the Holy Spirit pressed itself through the rules of speech, making language conform to it. We shall not wonder at this when we have consid-

ered the evidences in the Bible that the Holy Spirit is a person. We will simply bear in mind that the New Testament Greek never speaks of the Holy Spirit as "it," but always as "he."

To begin where the Holy Spirit is first spoken of in the New Testament, we may observe,

I. THE HOLY SPIRIT IS DECLARED TO BE THE AUTHOR OF CHRIST'S HUMAN NATURE.

God is the former of our bodies and the Father of our spirits; and God was as truly the author of Christ's human nature as of any other nature. Christ addressed God always as his Father, without, apparently, any distinction in his mind between Him and another person.

We naturally ask, then, why the Holy Ghost is specially declared to be the author of Christ's human nature? Why is not the name, so appropriate here, of the Father, used in such connection? It was said to Mary, "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore that holy thing that shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." It is also said that she "was with child of the Holy Ghost." If the Holy Spirit be merely divine influence, it cannot be satisfactorily shown why the birth of Jesus should not be spoken of as simply the act of God.

This, and the grammatical fact just mentioned, are certainly suggestive, whether we give much or little weight to them as positive arguments.

II. PERFECT KNOWLEDGE OF GOD IS ASCRIBED TO THE HOLY SPIRIT.

He is declared to possess a perfect knowledge of the divine nature. He is compared to human consciousness, or to the mind of a man taking cognizance of itself. "For the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man save the spirit of man which is in him? Even so knoweth no man the things of God save the Spirit of God." "The spirit of man which is in him" is, of course, our consciousness, which is but another name for the perception of that which passes in one's own mind. If the Holy Spirit be capable of such a knowledge of God as a man has of himself, it as truly proves the Holy Spirit to be God as one's own consciousness proves a man to be a man. If the Holy Spirit knows God as a man knows himself by his consciousness, the Holy Spirit is omniscient.

All who admit the force of this reasoning must also candidly admit that there is a seeming difficulty connected with the passage. A man's consciousness, or the spirit of a man, is the man himself, and is nowise distinct from him. Hence, it may be said, the Spirit of God is nowise distinct from God, but is God himself. To this it may be replied, What, then, is the use of the comparison? There is no good object answered in proving that God knows himself, as man knows himself. Two are spoken of in the beginning of this passage,— "*He that searcheth the heart* knoweth what is the mind

of *the Spirit*.” There is evidently some kind of distinction between these two. Now, in a comparison, it is not required that the two things be alike in all points. The only point in view with the sacred writer here, is, the perfect knowledge which the Spirit has of Him “that searcheth the heart.” This he compares to the perfect knowledge which a man has of himself by his consciousness. It would be illogical to insist that, because, in this comparison, the consciousness of a man is only the man thinking, so ‘the Spirit searching the deep things of God’ is God’s own consciousness. Were it so, the amount of the reasoning in this passage would be merely this: As man knows himself, so God knows himself;—which is not only useless, but seemingly irreverent.

III. THE HOLY SPIRIT IS THE SUCCESSOR OF CHRIST IN HIS WORK.

“It is expedient for you that I go away, for if I go not away the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart I will send him unto you.”

Interpret this as divine influence, and it is incomprehensible. For surely it could not be necessary for Christ to depart that ‘divine influence’ might visit the souls of the Apostles, and moreover the Saviour’s being in the world did not keep divine influence out of it, nor would it be increased by his departure. Throughout this last discourse of Christ to his disciples, allusion is made to some plan and arrangement by which He is to go away and be succeeded by another, this succes-

sor evidently having all the qualities of an intelligent being, a person. To fulfil the work of Christ, He must needs be divine.

IV. THE HOLY SPIRIT PERFORMS THE ACTIONS OF A PERSON.

He is represented as having planned the Old Testament dispensation: "the Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest while as yet the first tabernacle was standing." These words ascribe to Him the arrangement of the great typical economy, giving significance to its parts as related to future fulfilments, and interpreting them to the world by reason of his knowledge of them as their projector.

In accordance with this we find the Holy Spirit represented as the author of prophecy. The ancient prophets are said to have been "searching what or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify when it testified beforehand of the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow." "Well spake the Holy Ghost by the mouth of Esaias." "Holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." Again: "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith." And again: "He shall show you things to come." These are the acts of a person. Surely it is as much a person who is acting as they are persons who are acted upon, in the following words: "Being forbidden of the Holy

Spirit to preach the word in Asia, they went through Mysia, and endeavored to preach the Gospel in Bithynia; but the Spirit suffered them not." Again: "The Spirit said to Peter, Behold, three men seek thee. Go with them, nothing doubting." Again: He appoints men to office: "The Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul to the work whereunto I have called them." "So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed unto Seleucia." "Take heed to the flock over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers." He is declared to be present with the secret thoughts of inspired men: "The Holy Ghost shall teach you in that hour what things ye shall say." "The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father shall send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance." Again: "Why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie unto the Holy Ghost? Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God." "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, by whom ye are sealed unto the day of redemption."

If the New Testament made common use of personifications, like the poets or imaginative writers, or even like their own contemporary oriental writers, there would be some ground to assert that divine influence, the power and wisdom of God, were here spoken of as a person. But there are no instances in the Evangelists and in the Epistles where things are thus personified.—
But further:

V. THE HOLY SPIRIT IS THE AUTHOR OF REGENERATION.

Everywhere, the renewal and sanctification of the soul of man is ascribed to the Holy Spirit as his official work. All the exercises of the spiritual mind, the Christian graces, every thing, in short, pertaining to the progress of the soul in likeness to God, and all the communications of God to the soul of man, are declared to be the work of the Holy Spirit. Such terms as these will readily occur in this connection to every reader of the Bible: "born of the Spirit," "renewing of the Holy Ghost," "sanctification of the Spirit," "fruits of the Spirit," "signs and wonders by the power of the Holy Ghost," "abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost."

VI. THE HOLY SPIRIT IS THE ONLY OBJECT OF UNPARDONABLE OFFENCE.

"Whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him; but whoso shall speak against the Holy Ghost it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, nor in that which is to come."

It may well be asked, What conceivable meaning there is in this passage, and in others like it, unless personality be implied? When it is said that blasphemy against "the Son" is pardonable, we recognize "the Son" as a person, distinct from the Father; by the same necessity we must recognize "the Holy Ghost" as a person, distinct from the Son, and from the Father, when the Holy

Ghost is spoken of as the only object of unpardonable offence.

It cannot be explained why sinning against God is pardonable, but that to sin against an attribute, or influence, of God, is unpardonable. No one can tell what attribute of God, if any, is intended. Would it not have been specified? The offence "hath never forgiveness." The divine Lawgiver surely has not left it uncertain what the transgression is which is not forgiven, "neither in this world, nor in that which is to come." If the "Holy Spirit" be some attribute of God, and the attribute is not specified, we may say that the sin itself cannot be committed; "for where no law is there is no transgression," and certainly there is no "law" where there is no intelligible specification. We must know against whom, or against what, we are sinning, in order to be guilty. Especially is this true here, for the sin consists in "speaking against;"—not in mere mental acts, but in blaspheming some one or some thing by name. What "attribute" of God, then, is it which we must 'blaspheme,' before we commit a sin which "hath never forgiveness?"

But all is clear when we understand that the Holy Ghost is a person, a divine person, whose particular work it is to apply to the soul of man all that the Father and the Son, jointly and severally, have done toward his salvation; that the Holy Spirit is the last of the Three blessed Agents, in the appointed order of the redeeming work, completing the great design by striving to make the influences of heavenly grace efficacious with the indi-

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vidual. It is easy to see that he who not only resists, but by name blasphemes, the Holy Ghost, sins against the most concentrated of all the efforts which God proposes to make for his salvation. Without presuming to say that this, or any thing which may seem equally probable, is the reason why the sin against the Holy Ghost is unpardonable, we do see that it is a person who is sinned against, and not an influence, nor any mere thing.

VII. WE ARE BAPTIZED AND BLESSED IN THE NAME OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

To be baptized and blessed in the name of God, of Christ, and of an attribute, or influence, of God, is unintelligible. If baptism be a divine seal, we are led to expect that the names impressed upon us by that seal, one of them being divine, will be coëqual. The benediction is a prayer; the name of God is confessedly invoked in it; if the two other names be finite, let us imagine other finite names substituted for them, and men to be blessed and to be baptized in the name of the Father and of any two of the Apostles, nay, of any two of the angels. The name of God and the names of angels, God and his people, Christ and his church, God and our country, are frequently joined together; men are charged, conjured, in the name of God and of the holy angels. Paul charges Timothy “before God and the elect angels;” but when we are baptized, and when divine blessings are invoked, “who among the sons of the mighty can be likened unto the Lord?” “Behold he

put no trust in his servants, and his angels he charged with folly." Baptism is the initiatory rite of religion; any thing like vagueness in the formula of that ordinance seems impossible.

Nothing can prevail to set aside the proofs that the Holy Ghost is a person, except a demonstration that there cannot be three persons in the Godhead. The same proofs which establish personality in any case, are found in connection with the Holy Spirit; so that we venture the assertion that if his being proved to be a person would not be followed, inevitably, by his being admitted to be a person in the Godhead, men would no more question his personality than that of any who are named in the Bible.

The use of the term Holy Spirit, in places where the idea of a person is not absolutely necessary, does not prove either that the Holy Spirit, as a person, is not intended, nor that there is no such divine Person. In the Old Testament the personal distinctions in the Godhead are not expressly referred to with such distinctness as in the New.

It is an interesting truth, in connection with this subject, that the mystery of the Divine nature has been revealed more and more as the work of redemption has been unfolded. But, as the Lord Jesus Christ is everywhere in the Old Testament, so that "testimony concerning" Him is the very "spirit of prophecy," and as He is acting and speaking in places where we cannot prove it to

be so, we cannot doubt that frequently, where the term Holy Spirit in the Old Testament suggested to the Jewish mind only the idea of divine influence, the Holy Spirit as a Person is intended,—He who was afterward to be revealed in the initiatory rite of the Christian dispensation as one with the Father and the Son. The veil was not yet removed from his personality, nor wholly from that of the second Person in the Godhead, though both were performing their divine offices in the plan of redemption. Let us but suppose that there are Three Persons in the Godhead, and that they from the beginning are occupied with the work of human salvation. It will necessarily follow that from the beginning they were severally performing official acts, and therefore that they are referred to in the earliest records of the divine transactions, though for wise purposes they were not then made manifest, as they were at a subsequent period in the history of redemption. This will, of course, have weight only with those who believe in the doctrine of the Trinity. It is intended to encourage and confirm their belief that the Old Testament, which is full of the Lord Jesus, is also pervaded by the third Person in the Godhead, the Holy Spirit. Let us not suffer the unbeliever to intimidate us by challenging us to prove that it is the Redeemer and the Sanctifier who are intended in certain passages of the Old Testament, which we refrain from using for proof-texts in arguing with others. Faith does not, by any means, despise lexicons and grammars, nor logic, but while honoring them, she also remembers

these words of Jesus, in his declaration concerning the Holy Spirit — “ even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him ; but ye know him, for he dwelleth in you; and shall be in you.” When we consult a commentator on such a subject as this, it will be well first of all to inquire whether he gives evidence of having been himself born of the Spirit ; for if he “ cannot see the kingdom of God,” how can he lead others into it? “ The things of the Spirit of God ” “ are foolishness ” unto him. The manner in which the Holy Spirit is presented to our minds in the New Testament, accords with the gradual manner in which He is made known from the beginning.

It may be said that we are nowhere commanded to pray to the Holy Spirit. But if we are baptized in his name as in the name of a person, if his blessing is invoked whenever the Christian benediction is pronounced, if He is the author of regeneration, — to say no more, — then worship addressed to Him is as truly warrantable as in any case whatever. We cannot prescribe when, nor in what manner, nor in what degrees, from time to time, God shall make his revelations.

Perhaps we do not find in the Bible an express direction to worship Three, because our efforts to fulfil the spirit and the letter of so important a prescription would be likely to embarrass and confuse us. But suppose, instead of this, that the supreme Deity of the suffering and dying Redeemer is revealed, that the personality and Deity of the Holy Spirit are also made known, and that

we are baptized and blessed in their names, conjointly with the name of the Father, while at the same time the Father has precedence among the Three;—it is plain that the worship of the Three, being thus left to the secret impulses and frames of mind in each believer, is more simple, less embarrassed by an effort to connect the Three into one object of worship, and is paid in proportion to our spiritual exigencies and discoveries of the divine character, and its adaptedness to our wants. Truly it can be said, as the testimony of believers, that they appreciate the wisdom and goodness of God in thus leading them on by faith into the green pastures and beside the still waters of divine knowledge.

The Holy Spirit is the object of supreme worship in the hymns of the Christian church in all ages. Let us refer only to those which are now in common use, and we shall see how perfectly adapted the worship of the Holy Spirit is to Christian experience. The hymns beginning, "Come, Holy Spirit, heavenly Dove," and "Come, Holy Spirit, come," do not excite a thought of idolatrous worship. Being told that, when we believed, we were "sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance," the pledge "of the purchased possession," and reading the words of Christ respecting the Comforter, we sing, we pray to Him; though, if challenged to produce a text of Scripture commanding us to do so, we should be as much at a loss as we should be for explicit words of Scripture enjoining the practice of family prayer.

Secret prayer to the Holy Spirit is an indication of growing discrimination as to our wants. It shows that we make special efforts against particular temptations, and for the cultivation of particular Christian graces, and it is a proof of special communion and fellowship between the soul and God. As the only unpardonable sin is a sin against the Holy Ghost, we may infer that the relations of the Holy Spirit to man are such that the more we have of communion and fellowship with Him, the more we advance in the divine life. "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." "And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us."

To us as a sinful race, Jesus, the suffering, atoning Saviour, is now the most prominent object of faith. We acknowledge Him as the procuring cause of pardon and salvation. The Father pardons on his account; the Holy Spirit comes in consequence of his death,—(the Father sending Him, says Christ, "in my name.") But how is it in those worlds and among those orders of beings who have never sinned? None have returned to inform us. We may not do wrong to think that even there "the Word" is, in some way, the Revealer of Deity, as a *word* is the exponent of the secret thought. But it will help our conceptions with regard to the blessed Spirit to think that in those unfallen worlds, if such they be, the Holy Spirit may hold relationship to the inhabitants, not indeed rendered pathetic as the Saviour in his offices as Redeemer is to us, but con-

nected with their advancement in likeness to God. The intended use of such a consideration is merely to make us remember that the Holy Spirit, if divine, is not a temporary agent, employed only in our world; but that, as God the Spirit, He reigns over the wide realms of creation, thrones, dominions, principalities, and powers, being the subjects of his Almighty power. This serves to enhance our sense of obligation to Him as condescending to these poor, sinful hearts of men, and in our being made, as our bodies are said to be, the temples of the Holy Ghost. And we may also consider, to our great joy, that while the Lamb, who is in the midst of the throne, shall forever feed us and lead us to living fountains of waters, the blessed Spirit also will no doubt continue his benign and boundless influences over our sanctified natures, and be to us, it may be, personally, an object of love no less distinct, no less dear, than the Father and the Son. There is something inexpressibly beautiful in the thought of his secret, gentle influences, adapted now to the great purposes of probation so as not to interfere with our accountableness, and deriving, hereafter, a prominence in our grateful and admiring love in consequence of his being now officially subordinate, though, hereafter, it may be, becoming no less an object of love and joy than Christ.

We cannot, therefore, but pray to the Holy Spirit; for we were baptized, we are blessed, in his name. He awakens us, and convinces us of sin. Except a man be born of Him he cannot see the kingdom of God. If the

only sin which is unpardonable is a sin against the Holy Ghost, it follows that all sins against Him must be peculiarly heinous. We are warned not to “quench” Him, nor to “grieve” Him. By Him we are “sealed unto the day of redemption.”

One word in concluding this whole subject of the Divine Existence. — It is, of course, no more desirable to us in itself than it can be to those who differ from us, that this thick darkness of an impenetrable mystery — the doctrine of the Trinity — should be round about God. We do not create it; we find certain things revealed respecting Christ and the Holy Spirit, and they are such that one of two things is inevitable, namely, We must believe in Three Gods, or, The One God has a threefold distinction in His nature.

VII.

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VII.

MAN.

THERE is to every being and thing a Nature. It is not character, — meaning by that the average result of conduct; it is antecedent to conduct. The nature may exist for a season without manifesting its intrinsic qualities.

We see this illustrated in every thing that grows out of the earth. Before a plant is old enough to have qualities, either useful or hurtful, it has a nature, known to the botanist, and physician, or to the florist, and upon discovery of its nature, it is selected from the products of a whole field to be transplanted, that its nature may, by appropriate treatment, be developed. The feelings of the botanist or florist partake of approbation towards that undeveloped and at present useless, plant, as really as though it had already put forth the qualities which it is sure to possess. As his eye lights upon its feeble form just appearing above the ground, he exclaims, This is mint, or anise; this is a rose, or a grape-vine. He imputes to that nature the qualities which it has not yet

manifested; it is an object of love with him; or if it be a poisonous plant, he treats it accordingly.

This may be more strikingly seen in the feelings which we all have toward the new-born of animals and reptiles, before they have put forth their first actions. A child finds an unfledged bird fallen from its nest; the child's parent is called, and the helpless thing is kindly restored to its dam. The next moment a young, helpless snake is seen in the grass; it is yet as harmless as the sparrow; the feelings of the child are entirely the reverse of those which the sparrow occasioned; the parent is appealed to, with a cry of terror, to kill the reptile. But the reptile might well say, Why is this! I have done no harm. I am incapable of stinging. The vessels formed to hold poison have no poison in them. I am as innocent as the sparrow which you have so tenderly restored to the nest.

We see in the children of the same family something lying back of accidental circumstances, and manifesting itself in a way peculiar to each child, though all were watched over and nurtured by the same parents and attendants from the beginning. This is the child's nature. Some, disregarding the distinction between our nature as God originally made it, and as our first parents depraved it, say, The child's nature came from the hand of God as truly as the color of its eyes and hair. This is not correct. Interposing causes, it is true, have not lessened God's sovereignty as to the formation of this nature, but still our nature is not as it originally came

from God. Yet when one thoughtlessly ridicules another for some natural defect or peculiarity, and the reply is, I am as God made me, conscience echoes the reproof, and no cavil about the intervention of earthly parentage ever arises to diminish a consciousness of reproaching God if we mock an unfortunate fellow-creature for his natural infirmity. Job says, without fear of any speculative objections, "Did not He that made me in the womb, make him? And did not one fashion us in the womb?" But we must never forget that "God made man upright," and that man voluntarily departed from God, and that thereby "judgment came upon all men to condemnation." •

There is that in man when he is born, by whatever name we designate it, which constitutes a certainty that the man will sin. This condition of things in the man at his birth is commonly called his nature.

It appears from the narrative in the second chapter of Genesis, that the first human pair were created with a nature predisposed to holiness, and were placed on probation. We know the result. Very many questions have been asked, and will continue to be asked, in vain, respecting this origin of evil in connection with the race. The testimony of the word of God is perfectly simple; it is wise not to venture beyond it into the unfathomable mysteries of the divine counsels.

Revelation informs us that of the angels some have fallen, while others remain upright; but nothing is said to warrant, nor to discourage, the inference that all

intelligent creatures are, at some period of their existence, placed on probation. We only know that this was certainly the case with man.

The object being to try him, whether he would obey God, we perceive, by the narrative, that the trial was as favorable to him as we could imagine a trial to be. He had full proof of the goodness of God; his wants were every way provided for; one prohibition only was made, and the promises and threatenings of God connected with it were most explicit. The direful result, and the manner in which it came to pass, are told in the plainest terms.

That all their posterity were, in some way, involved by this act of their first parents, is evident as well from express declarations of Scripture, as from the nature of the curses which ensued upon their fall. The ground was cursed; hard labor was imposed as the necessary means of sustenance; we know what was said to woman, and how literally all these curses are fulfilled.

That there is a connection between the moral character of our first parents and their posterity, the Scriptures assert in direct terms. "By one man's offence death reigned by one." By the trial and failure of our first parents, all their posterity come into existence predisposed to evil, so that all men inevitably sin.

As early as the time of Job, it was said, — "How can he be clean that is born of a woman?" Such an indiscriminate stigma on woman would not have been uttered, were she not incapable of giving birth

to offspring with an upright nature. Even the flood failed to restore man to uprightness, for the Most High said of him, after the flood, "The imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth." All is summed up when it is said by the inspired prophet, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, who can know it?" Omniscience alone answers this question: "I, the Lord, search the heart; I try the reins."

Our Saviour's testimony as to the natural state and character of man, is terrible. Suppose that from the door of a house, impersonated murder, theft, uncleanness of every shape should commonly proceed. We could be in no doubt as to the character of the house. Now Christ says, "Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witnesses, blasphemies." It would insure destruction to a house or punishment to its owner to represent such terrible things as its accustomed deliveries.

Paul in the Epistle to the Romans declares that "every mouth" is "stopped" from self-justification, and "the whole world is become guilty before God;" and that "by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified." If the bias of man to good and to evil is originally equal, it is unaccountable that "no flesh" should have grown to man's estate free from sin. The Ephesian Christians are told by Paul that they were "by nature the children of wrath even as others." The current manner of speaking when the world of mankind is referred to, shows how God regards them. "The

world" has a bad name in the Word of God. "The friendship of the world is enmity with God." "Whoso will be a friend of the world is an enemy of God." One of the names of the devil is, "the god of this world."

If any thing more could be needed, we have it in the declaration that "the carnal mind is enmity against God, not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." "So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God." "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him." It is said of us, "They are all gone out of the way; there is none that doeth good, no, not one."

"There must be, and there is, in man," says one,¹ "something which is the ground and reason that the will of fallen man does, from the beginning, act wrong, — something anterior to voluntary action." "There must be some ground, in the nature of the race, for the early personal and actual sin with which they are all chargeable." "To say that all men sin, actually, universally, and forever, until renewed by the Holy Ghost, and that against the strongest possible motives, merely because they are free agents, and are able to do so, and that there is in their nature as affected by the fall, no cause or reason of the certainty, is absurd. It is to ascribe the most stupendous concurrence of perverted action in all the adult millions of mankind, to nothing.

¹ Rev. Lyman Beecher, D. D. Quoted by Dr. Woods, II. 213

The thing to be accounted for, is, the phenomenon of an entire series of universal, actual sin; and to ascribe the universal and entire obliquity of the human will to the simple ability of choosing wrong, is to ascribe the moral obliquity of a lost world to nothing."

Dr. Chalmers says, "Should it be found true of every man that he is actually a sinner, should this hold universally true with each individual of the human family; if in every country of the world, and in every age of the world's history, all who have grown old enough to be capable of showing themselves, were transgressors against the law of God,—and, if, among all the accidents and varieties of condition to which humanity is liable, each member of humanity shall betake himself to his own ways and deviations from the rule of right—then he sins purely in virtue of his being a man; there is something in the very make and mechanism of his nature which causes him to be a sinner."—"To talk of the original sin of our species, thereby intending to signify the existence of a prior and universal disposition to sin, is just as warrantable as to affirm the most certain laws or soundest classifications in natural history."

On this important and perplexing subject writers are in danger of two extremes. They may attempt to silence inquiry by enjoining upon us unconditional submission to God; or, they may lead us into speculations, with the amiable purpose of vindicating the justice of God.

When we have ascertained the revealed truth on this, or on any subject, it is not improper for us, in a humble and cautious way, to point out reasons which we think we see for adoring the wisdom of God; and yet, in doing thus, we shall be in danger of prescribing rules to the divine conduct, and of saying that one thing must be, and that another cannot be, and, as the result, seeming to bestow our poor approval upon the plans and ways of God. We must be watchful against this, and, equally so against the tendency to make our preconceived convictions of what should be, and must be, the rule by which we interpret Scripture, and construct our theories.

Very many difficulties connected with the present subject would be obviated, and the minds of many would be relieved with regard to questions which never can be determined, would we but properly consider a certain question of the inspired Apostle in connection with the subject. It is this: "Shall the thing formed say unto him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?"

Because we violate the letter and spirit of the truth implied in this question, we fall into the mazes of speculation about the existence and origin of sin. As to the clay in the hands of the potter, we agree that the clay has no right to call in question the wisdom of the potter. But men have declared it to be inconsistent with the justice, or the wisdom, or the benevolence of God, to determine that we shall each be born with an inherited nature

which will inevitably develop itself in sinful dispositions and actions. We, being intelligent creatures, it is said, have a right to judge with regard to the justice of God's plan; and we object that in the nature of things, it is not right so to connect offspring with parents that accountable creatures shall receive a nature which will inevitably lead to sin, or to hold us responsible for the acts committed under the operation of that pre-arranged bias. Therefore, it is said, it cannot be that God has connected the nature of each human being with the sin of Adam, because it would be unjust. The passages of Scripture which seem to assert this, must be construed in conformity with the dictates of justice.

To get relief, some insist that the child is born free from any bias to evil, and that the general depravation of the race is owing to evil examples. Others reply that God connected us with Adam in his trial, but meets us at once with recovering mercy at our birth, providing a Second Adam for us, to save us, if we die in infancy, by that regeneration which comes as a consequence of redemption, — a free gift, — as our connection with Adam was, also, without our choice. Moreover, they say that if no one is finally lost merely for his connection with Adam, and that in every case, the sinner will be held responsible only for his own acts as though he were on trial in Paradise, no injustice is inflicted upon him.

Happily for man, it is not necessary, in order to know and do his duty, that he should say to Him that formed

him, "Why hast thou made me thus?" or that he should know any thing beyond the plain truth that he sinned as soon as he began to do any thing, and that he received from his parents and through the sin of the first human pair, a nature which would inevitably sin as soon as it was capable of moral action. Here the Bible stops, and here it would persuade us to pause. Ages of conflict would have been prevented had man but hearkened to its voice. We must be willing to admit that a sovereign God is holy, just, and good while bringing us each into existence with a nature which from the beginning of moral action will certainly go astray from God; and that this is in consequence of "one man's disobedience." We shall fall into difficulties as great as those from which we try to escape, if, in order to clear up the ground of human accountability, we venture to bring the moving cause of man's universal sinfulness one step forward of his inherited nature into his volitions. There is something back of volitions which constitutes the certainty which there is that every man will sin. But in connection with it there is a mystery related to the will and agency of God in the case, which has never been solved.

While, in order, as they think, to clear the way for appeals to man as accountable for being a sinner, some deny the original corruption of our nature, they, in common with all men, involuntarily show, by some of the ordinary modes of speech, that the badness of a nature is a proper cause for humiliation and self-reproach. If a youth sins, and men can say of him, "The stock is bad," and can

refer to the notorious wickedness of his immediate progenitors, we feel that the sight of the evil done by his parents, and its consequences, ought to have deterred him from transgression, and that it does not palliate his sins. The same principle appears in the declaration by the Most High that no man doing righteously shall suffer for the sins of progenitors ; thus indirectly asserting the ordinary law which involves parent and child one with the other, when both are transgressors. Experience and observation everywhere teach us, that a consciousness of inborn and inbred evil is a proper cause for humiliation and confession. We all of us go back from our actual sins to the source and fountain of them in our original depravity. We are more humbled at being capable of sinning, than at the sin. Though David speaks of his mother to the Most High as "thine handmaid," yet he says, "Behold I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." We may call such feelings and expressions the suggestions of modesty, or the exaggerations of oriental speech ; but the concurrent voice of the human heart groaning with a sense of sin and misery, utters the same strain from age to age. When men feel intensely on any subject, they resort to metaphorical language, and on no subject is language laid under a more extreme contribution than in the efforts of men to express their consciousness of guilt and the evil of sin. Thus the theology of the intellect, when it is clear and strong, resorts to the feelings for help to express itself ; and then the metaphors which it employs, instead of being flowers of speech, are

agonies and wailings, illustrating the remark of Coleridge, before quoted, that "the feeling is often the deeper reason."

But why, it is involuntarily asked, should God have connected mankind with the sin of their first parents?

One consideration will serve to show, in answer to all such inquiries, how utterly incapable we are of calling in question the wisdom and benevolence of God in making judgment to come upon all men to condemnation for the sin of their first parents. Let us consider how totally different was the treatment of our first parents by their Heavenly Father from the treatment which erring children would, upon their first offence, receive from an earthly parent. He would naturally say, As this is your first transgression, I shall pass it by, and will forgive you. Instead of this, suppose that he should at once eject them from their residence, given them by himself; that he should station swordsmen to keep them from it; that he should inflict injury upon the very soil where they might fix their dwelling, and thus subject them to painful labor in procuring the necessaries of life; that sickness and bodily pain should be their lot when it was in his power to prevent it, and that murder, and pestilence, and famine, and, in short, every form of evil, should be allowed to prevail over their posterity in all their generations;—and all this as a consequence of their first transgression, which he had refused to pass by!

Now, whatever difficulties may, in any view of the

case, present themselves to our minds, on this subject of original sin, we plainly see, in the way in which God has visited the race for the sin of their first parents, that we cannot apply to his administration, for its rule, our moral sentiments, nor our instincts, nor the accustomed modes of procedure which are proper in the intercourse of men with one another. And we may as well, therefore, first as last, give over any such attempt; we are as really at fault in our moral conceptions of what is infinitely wise and benevolent, as the clay, if it could speak, might be, in its colloquy with the potter as to its shape and use.

It may serve a good purpose in some cases to show that, so far as we can see, our condition might not have been any more favorable had we each stood, as Adam did originally, to try for himself the question whether he would remain upright. This view of the case, while it does not lead us into speculation, will serve to relieve certain painful thoughts which many have on this subject.

It seems that God, instead of placing each of us on probation to determine what the condition of our nature shall be, whether upright or fallen, has tried that question for each of us, and for all men, in the persons of representatives, the first human pair.

But a part of the plan, evidently, was, to provide redemption for the race, immediately upon the apostasy of its representatives. We need not exercise ourselves with supposing cases, and with trying to decide whether

it would have been just for God to have done certain things in certain circumstances. We are to take these two plain things together, namely, Man's apostasy from God as a race, in the person of his progenitors, and, Redemption immediately provided, in the person of another representative of the race, the Seed of the Woman.

One thing is plain, even to reason unassisted by revelation, namely, That we should all probably hesitate to try, each in our own person, the question of our continuance in original uprightness, if no Redeemer were to be provided for us in case of failure. For we perceive that our nature, in the garden of Eden, in circumstances the most favorable to a continuance in holiness, failed.

There were two of our race on trial. One yielded to a tempter operating on her curiosity; the other, and the stronger nature, yielded at the solicitation, and after the example, of the weaker. We must be well assured of our strength to resist temptation if we say that we would have done better in the same circumstances than our first parents. And he must have a superhuman fancy who can invent a more favorable trial than was granted to them.

But one may say, Think of the millions of our race who, coming into existence with a bias to evil, follow it, and live and die in sin. How much better to have given them each a fair chance for himself!

One obvious answer is,—It cannot be denied that as many might have perished upon that scheme as will

now fail of salvation. Until we know that an equal or greater number would not have apostatized from original uprightness, we, leaving Revelation out of view, are unable to object, that the present plan was not the most benevolent and wise.

It cannot be shown that our fallen nature will, of itself, be the cause of any man's perdition; nor that any will be lost who would not have fallen, had every one been created upright like Adam, to try for himself the question of perseverance in uprightness.

While we know that men do come into existence with a nature which will inevitably sin, and therefore that its preponderance is to evil, we are to recollect, if we speculate, that redemption was immediately provided for man when he fell. If one proceeds to ask, But would it have been just and benevolent if God had entailed sin and future misery on men, in consequence of the error of their progenitor, without providing a Redeemer?—we may answer, Why should we be disquieted in vain about that which is not? Enough for us that, born with a nature absolutely inclined to evil and not to good, we are born into a world and under a constitution in which mercy, all over the earth, meets us, when we come into existence. If God had made any other arrangement, of course it would have been just and benevolent; for, “as for God, his work is perfect.” “I know,” says the wise man, “that whatsoever God doeth, it shall be forever; nothing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from

it; and God doeth it that men should fear before him." While we bow to this, with love and trust, we are not in the present case left on the dark sea of speculation. The bestowment of mercy in the form of redemption is as much a historic part of the transactions in Eden as the transgression; and the two things must be coupled together in our minds to complete any just idea of the scheme. If, therefore, one says to himself, Would it have been just to connect our inherited nature with the sin of Adam, if no Redemption had been provided, we may answer, Such is not the case with man.

If one still insists, 'I would prefer to have tried the question, in my own person, whether to stand or fall;'—we have already seen that Paradise and the discomfiture, which it witnessed, of our nature in its best estate, should admonish us to decline the risk. If we desire a further admonition, we have it in the angels of God themselves, whose experience in heaven, and the very presence of God himself were not able to keep them from apostasy, but a morning star among them fell by transgression, and with him a host. Behold them with no Redeemer. Such, we cannot deny, might have been the consequences to each of us had we stood each for himself, and had lost our original uprightness, as Adam did, by one transgression. But to this it will be said, True, yet it was possible to have brought each of us into a state of probation upright, and to have provided Redemption for those who should have apostatized. To

this we say, Angels sinned, not in consequence of an inherited evil nature, but each on his personal probation, in an upright state; for them, falling as they did, no Redeemer was provided. Man, too, falls in his personal probation, but he is to have a posterity born in his sinful likeness; for them a Redeemer is provided. All this is from the Word of God. Adhering closely to the information which it gives us, and remaining satisfied with it, we cannot err. With regard to man, God has declined to try each of us in a state of uprightness. Do we raise the question whether it would have been more just and wise for Him to have decided the other way? Supposing that angels and men, respectively, represent the two schemes of the personal and federal probation of original natures, and that to personal probation no redemption can be annexed, but that it is a necessary accompaniment, in the divine plan, when a nature is tried in a representative, to provide redemption for his posterity, we of the human race surely cannot bring any complaint against the divine procedure in our case. For, if the two things invariably go together, namely, redemption, and the connection of a nature with the act of a progenitor, or if, finding them together in our case, we are at last led to suspect that there is no Redeemer to those who are tried and fall in an upright state, each for himself, alone, then we are prepared to say that instead of blaming Infinite Wisdom and Benevolence for suffering us to come into the world with a nature already tried and fallen, we may perhaps see

reasons for gratitude to God that we are born into a condition in which, if we are willing to comply with the appointed method of salvation, not even a sinful nature, and perpetual inability to keep the law of God, will put us in jeopardy of eternal death; "for not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift; for the judgment was by one to condemnation; but the free gift is of many offences unto justification." We say then, Before a man impugns the present constitution, he is bound at least to suppose a possible condition of things which would be for the better.

If there is to be risk as to our salvation, it is evidently far better for us to take that risk under a constitution of mercy instead of law;—far better to let the question be, Will I reject mercy? than, Will I yield to no possible form of temptation to sin?—it certainly is better, provided that one act of consent to sin would be followed by consecutive transgressions without end, as in the case of angels.

All this, however, is a mere defensive mode of statement. It is not implied, and no one can say it, that the only alternative before the Divine Mind was, the connection of a race with its progenitor and a Redeemer, or personal probation without a Redeemer. Knowing how the case actually is with regard to man, the only proper stand for us to take is upon the Word of God, and to require of ourselves and of others implicit submission to its unequivocal teachings. If we differ as to interpretation, that is one thing; but if we interpret alike, and

then object to the revelation that there are insuperable difficulties in the way of accepting it, we at once destroy the authority of revelation. It is a legitimate use of reason to show that those who dissent from the plain declarations of God's word involve themselves in no less difficulties than those from which they profess to flee. And it is not unsuitable to persuade others, who are tempted to forsake the Bible, that they are no better off on any other scheme than that which, in the Bible, tries their confidence in the wisdom and goodness of God.



VIII.

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IF human nature be thus determined beforehand as to its depraved condition when man enters upon this probationary state, and if he receives from the hand of God a nature with a bias to sin, how is he accountable? Why should he not act out his nature?

The Bible being our only source of information with regard to these questions, we may say, that the accountability of men is everywhere assumed in Scripture as fully as his guilt. But the Bible does not go behind the sinner's consciousness in its charges and in its demands upon him. God has connected the nature of every human being with the fall of his first parents; yet every one is dealt with as being fully responsible.

One maxim, remembered and applied, will help us greatly in connection with this subject. It is this: Though, in debating with regard to theories, it be lawful to say whether this or that is consistent with the divine attributes, yet, when we find that God has actually done any thing, all question about its justice, wisdom, and benevolence, is forever out of place. We may well employ ourselves in showing forth the wisdom and

benevolence in his actions, if we are modest, and confess how little, after all, we know, even in this direction; but to debate whether the appointments of the Most High are wise and good, is not within our proper province.

The difficulties connected with the subject of human accountability always lead us back to the original determination of the Most High to create moral agents, with liability to sin and to perish. We are compelled to resolve every thing at last into the sovereign will of God, taking things as we find them, and receiving his revealed will as the only, and the sufficient, rule of our duty.

It will in some way assist us to do this, to ask ourselves the following question: How, if God saw fit to create us free to choose, and personally responsible for our final salvation, would it now appear to us most wise and benevolent for Him to bring us into our state of probation? Shall it be on our own personal responsibility for continuance with an upright nature, with no provision in case of our fall? or, shall He try the question for us all in the person of a federal head, we, then, coming into the world with the fallen nature of our progenitor, and having this for our probation, Will you accept redemption, and be saved, on terms propounded by God your Saviour?

In choosing for us this latter method of being placed on trial, no man can say that God has done him any wrong, or that He has been unkind, unless it was wrong to create him; for to prove this, he must show

that he would certainly have fared better had he been allowed to stand originally upon his own righteousness, and to take the risk of keeping or losing his integrity. Or, he must show that the chances would have been in favor of his remaining upright. Surely he cannot say this with the example of our first parents before him, and knowing, too, that angels in heaven left their first estate.

As to the mode in which we are now severally tried, it may be observed, in illustration of the kindness and fairness which marks it, that we are told: "God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will, with the temptation, also make a way for your escape, that ye may be able to bear it." From the very first, conscience, God's vicegerent, is set to protect and keep us. There is placed before us a suffering Redeemer, a sacrifice for our sins; this is made the source of the most pathetic appeals to us that we deny ourselves and, "forasmuch as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh," that we "arm ourselves likewise with the same mind." His aid is promised: "For in that He hath suffered, being tempted, He is able also to succor them that are tempted." The Holy Spirit is specially intrusted with the work of making and keeping us holy, and promises exceeding great and precious are made to him who overcomes.

It is plain, then, that our sinful nature of itself will never be the cause of any man's final perdition; and it cannot be shown that one will be lost who would not

have been lost had he been created upright, like Adam, to try the question for himself, without a Redeemer in case of failure, whether he will forever resist temptation.

The ancestors of every nation once had the knowledge of salvation by Christ. The vast majority "did not like to retain God in their knowledge." Then the great law by which parents and children are connected and involved as to moral character and condition, comes into view; but, at the same time, every individual is declared still to be without excuse for irreligion, "because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath showed it unto them." The absence of the Bible will not affect their condemnation, for their consciences, the works of God, experience of goodness notwithstanding their sins, furnish perpetual lessons as to the character of God and his disposition towards them. "So that they are without excuse;"—which words are a rebuke to unjust commiseration.

We come, therefore, to consider more minutely the actual effect of Adam's sin upon the character of his posterity.

On this point the Bible is explicit. "By one man's disobedience many were made sinners." This is bold, unequivocal language. The obvious meaning is, that they were placed under a constitution of things by which they come into the world with the same fallen nature which man had after his first transgression. "By one man's offence death reigned by one." "In Adam all die."

So that, as a consequence of Adam's sin, the nature of every man is in a fallen condition, averse to the moral character of God; and its first moral acts will inevitably be wrong. Every infant, therefore, has a nature as really apostate from God as the nature of Adam was upon his fall. "Death reigned from Adam to Moses even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression." No infant is ever known to develop a sinless nature; its immediate parents do not transmit to the child their regenerated state, but its connection with the first human pair asserts itself, without exception. An infant, therefore, needs regeneration as truly as an adult. An infant has a nature, and it is a nature which is not in conformity to God.

It is the view of some that an infant comes into the world with its nature equipoised as to sin and holiness; that it no more needs regeneration than a rosebud; only let it develop fairly, and it will be holy.

It is remarkable, if this be so, that the race has not improved from age to age, or that we do not see in children instances of entire freedom from the predisposition to sin. If men at any period of their lives are destitute of a nature, there is a period when they are not capable of regeneration, for then there is no evil tendency, no predisposition needing to be cured. Should the child die in that condition, what assurance is there that in heaven it will be forever holy, seeing that angels in heaven fell? If it goes to heaven on the ground of its own personal constitution, it may leave its first estate

like them. If infants are not depraved, they have no moral connection with Adam. It is to them, in that respect, as though he had not sinned. When they die, they have nothing to do with Christ. It is incorrect to speak of them as being "saved;"—indeed, why is it not as incorrect as to say that a ministering angel, returning from earth to heaven, is "saved"? We shall find it difficult to allow that the vast proportion of the human race who have gone to heaven in infancy, are not, in any sense, under obligations to redemption, that they are not and cannot be of those who speak of Christ as "Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood." There is much to ponder in these lines :

" Bold infidelity! turn pale and die!
 Beneath this stone four infants' ashes lie.
 Say, are they lost or saved?
 If death's by sin, they sinned, for they lie here;
 If heaven's by works, in heaven they can't appear;
 Reason, ah! how depraved, revere the sacred page,
 They died, for Adam sinned; they live, for Jesus died."

It is a sad view of the infant world to regard them as separated from the adult race in the participation of benefits flowing from the Saviour.

The Bible, in maintaining its silence on the subject of our relation to Adam, and its consequences, except to declare that a relation exists such that, in consequence of it, "all have sinned," forbears to utter a word with regard to the state of infants after death. There

is much unholy feeling manifested on this subject, indicating a querulous temper, an unsubmissive heart. Human relationships in their depth and strength are offered as arguments which it is felt by many should control our views of the divine administration. But it is very strange that, standing in their desolated homes, where death has trampled on their tenderest affections and cut asunder ruthlessly their very heart-strings, men should not see that the natural affections which God has implanted in us are not the rule for his dispensations; else, why do the children die? Whatever, therefore, we may feel or say with regard to the salvation of infants, we should not suffer ourselves to prescribe our natural feelings as a guide for the divine conduct. Some believe that there are elect infants; others, that all of them having, without their choice, fallen in Adam, and having no personal probation, are, without their choice, made partakers of redemption by Christ. This may be said to be the present universal hope and belief of the Christian world. In expressing it we should remember that the Bible is silent on the subject, and we should not be moved, by the fear of being made odious, to venture assertions, nor to adopt a mode or tone of reasoning which, in kindly sympathizing with human instincts, may really take part with man against God.

How are the common representations of human depravity consistent with all which is confessedly amiable and praiseworthy in men? In what sense is man depraved?

There are amiable and benevolent instincts, social virtues, affections which give a charm to the domestic relations, courtesies, acts of kindness, which make human intercourse pleasant, self-denial for others, and self-sacrifice, and the highest forms of cultivation, and even a certain fear of God, leading to a sense of dependence and obligation, and to acts of worship.

But every human being is by nature averse to the moral character of God. We are capable of perceiving, appreciating, and loving all forms of moral goodness. We see children happy at the reception of gifts, and grateful for them, and fully capable of appreciating them. They listen to tales and show that they discern between good and evil. Every created object, and every character, according as it is good or bad, excites a corresponding emotion.

God is an exception, and He is the only exception, in the effect which his character has upon us. The Author, Source, and Sum of all excellence is the only object who is not, as a matter of course, loved and sought after. Is it natural to be filled with enthusiasm at the thought of God? But there is no natural impossibility in the way of this. His mountains, his ocean, his waterfalls, his firmament, excite enthusiasm; why not their Maker? If it be said that his natural greatness cannot be so appreciated as to excite such feelings, it may be replied that some men do become enthusiastic in their feelings about God. David is an example, and Isaiah, and Daniel, and Paul, and the

number is great of those since their day, to the present hour, who, like them, having experienced a certain spiritual renovation, love God supremely. Why, therefore, is it not universally the case that men love God? Why is not the literature of the world imbued with these feelings toward God? Why could not Lord Byron have written in such strains as these by Dr. Watts? —

“My God, my portion, and my love!
 My everlasting all!
 I’ve none but thee in heaven above,
 Nor on this earthly ball.”

We find the poets filled with rapture about nature, human beauty, art, Switzerland, Italy; they are devotees of genius in music, sculpture, painting, eloquence; but equal love and zeal with regard to God our Maker would make their works, as a general thing, distasteful.

If any one says, Can man be permitted to love God in the way described? We reply, Not only is he permitted, but the Saviour tells us, “The sum of all the commandments is, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment.”

Is it natural for men to love God in this way? Is it natural for fathers to pray with their families? It is a dictate of reason that God should be acknowledged; and the appointed way of acknowledging Him is by prayer. Yet men are extremely averse to this duty

and privilege. They talk with their families, freely and enthusiastically, about every thing which interests them, but toward God their hearts are cold, their lips are sealed.

It is not pertinent to say, I am as good as multitudes of my kind. It is nothing to the point that we love men, that we are endowed with every social virtue. It would be easy to show that love to God is the necessary foundation of love to man, and that we are as really degenerate as to our feelings and duties toward our fellow men as toward God. But even if we could keep the second table of the commandments, namely, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself," still the first commandment is greater than all, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God;" and our perfect compliance with other requirements, could we fulfil them, would only show how perfect is our natural ability to keep the first, and therefore how inexcusable we are in failing to keep it.

The depravation of any thing whatever cannot be expressed, the idea of it cannot be conceived of, if it be not apparent from all this that there is entire depravation in man as to his natural feelings toward God. In addition to this, the mind of man is not subject to the law of God, and the Scripture is most explicit which says of it, in its natural, unrenewed state,—"Neither indeed can be." Suppose a machine, or a ship, or an animal, or a tool, or a servant, to be as totally degenerated from its original appointment and

use as man is from supreme love and obedience to God;—the terms commonly applied to the depravity of man would not be too strong to express our just opinion of them.

The first subjects of the first transgression were utterly degraded from their original intimacy with God, conscious guilt and shame took possession of them, the ground was cursed for their sake, the multiplication of the species was to be “in sorrow,” and by that one man’s offence judgment was to come upon all men to condemnation. Now we cannot doubt, in view of all this, that human nature received, in the persons of our progenitors, an injury which cannot be measured; for what have its consequences already been, in the history and the present condition of the human family?

But man’s condition under the remedial dispensation which ensued upon the fall is such that his natural depravity is qualified in many of its presentations; things in him which contribute to happiness are strengthened and developed, and much that is charming supervenes upon his state of natural aversion to God. But when we consider who God is, and that supreme love and perfect obedience in thought, word, and deed, are natural duties, no one of ordinary intelligence can fail to see that language fails in expressing the utter depravation of our human nature. And when we see how this human nature, unrestrained by law, custom, cultivation, and self-interest, runs riot in every form of transgression against men, we are made to confess that the descriptions

of human nature by inspired pens are not the work of fancy, nor mere oriental rhetoric.

It is not presumption to believe that the fall of angels and of man are lessons to the unfallen universe as to the inherent weakness of a created nature, the terrible nature of sin, and its awful consequences in the individual and to the race, both in its immediate effects and in its penalty, so that God will forever administer his government over his creatures by the help of these great illustrations. A moral government is a government of motives, instead of force. These sad and terrible histories may not be without their effect.

As to ourselves, we cannot fail to see the evil of sin when we contemplate the effect of one transgression. But the effect of Adam's sin in its wide-spread devastation was not owing to any inherent heinousness of that sin beyond those which we ourselves have committed; for had each of us stood, as Adam did, in the same relation to a race, we too might have looked forth forever on a numberless progeny ruined by our fault. Such is sin, and we are each a sinner.

The world, for us, is full of trees of the knowledge of good and evil, that is, of forbidden things, abstinence from which in obedience to God will be followed with the knowledge of good, and indulgence in which will entail the knowledge of evil.

And when we see what it is for a nature to be fallen, and to continue fallen, we have still further illustrations of sin. We see in the New Testament those who once

filled thrones in heaven, now saying to the Saviour of the world, "If thou cast us out, suffer us to enter into the swine." Such is sin, when it is finished. The time may come when any human being retaining a sinful nature, would be capable, if permitted, to go forth and ruin a race, as he, that former morning star, who fell from heaven with his angels, ruined this world. Surely, we need not merely to be kept day by day from transgression; we need not only a good character; we need a new nature — we must be born again.

There is a cheerful view of this subject which deserves a brief allusion. Notice in the fifth of Romans, where this subject of our connection with Adam is dwelt upon at length, how the Apostle turns it into a prospect and a promise of enhanced blessedness through redeeming wisdom and love. In five different places, after describing the wisdom of God in his plan and operation on the dark, mysterious side of the scene, he points across to a bright and animating view, and uses the expression five several times, "much more," assuring us that the result of this whole economy relating to the fall of man will, to those who avail themselves of the offered salvation, result in stupendous blessings.

This is the Apostle's presentation of the subject: "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. *Much more* then, being justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him." — "For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of

his Son, *much more*, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life." — "But not as the offence so is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, *much more* the grace of God and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many." — "For if by one man's offence death reigned by one, *much more* they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ." — "Moreover the law entered that sin might abound; but where sin abounded, grace did *much more* abound; that as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord."

Great questions relating to the existence of sin and suffering under the government of a benevolent God, their consistency with the increased happiness of the universe as a whole, and the vast problem of divine sovereignty, and the perfect accountableness of man, will probably task human ingenuity and put faith and submission to the test in time to come, as heretofore. But all which is necessary to human happiness and welfare is, nevertheless, as plain as noonday, namely, that we are, individually, guilty of sins by our own free consent, against express commands and restraining influences of every kind, and against the love of God, so that every mouth is stopped, and no flesh can be justified; that God is willing to forgive sin; that He has provided a way in which to justify us and yet be just; that God will not suffer us "to be tempted above that"

we "are able;" but that He "will also make a way to escape that" we "may be able to bear it;" that "who-soever believeth" in the Son "shall not come into condemnation," and that him "that cometh unto" Him He "will in no wise cast out." Knowing these things, which it is the object of the Gospel to set forth, if we forget our personal responsibility and our personal probation under the Gospel, and insist on receiving explanations as to the existence of sin, we shall fail both of satisfaction and of final salvation. It is good to place ourselves and the government of the world, of men, of angels, and of devils, in the hands of the Supreme God, expecting that there will be inscrutable mysteries in his administration, and leaning always to such interpretations and conclusions as exalt God and humble man. It has already been noticed that when the Almighty condescended to reason with Job on the mysteries of his administration, He gave him hard lessons in the science of the most familiar things, — the rain, the snow, the ice, the balancings of the clouds, the flight of birds. "Then Job answered the Lord and said, — Who is he that hideth counsel with words without knowledge? Therefore have I uttered that I understood not; things too wonderful for me which I knew not."

These things, then, seem to be established:

We come into the world with a nature which will inevitably develop itself as depraved.

Notwithstanding this, our accountability is in no wise lessened.

We are born under a constitution of mercy.

It cannot be proved that the chance of endless happiness is not as great, to every man, as though he had tried the question, in a state of innocence, whether he would stand forever, or fall, like angels, without recovery.

Many questions as to the justice and wisdom of the present constitution of things result in questions as to the justice of creating immortal beings liable to sin. When we reach questions of this nature, if not before, we are met with these interrogatories: "Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord, or, being his counselor, hath taught him? With whom took he counsel, and who instructed him, and taught him in the path of judgment?"

IX.

ATONEMENT.



IX.

A T O N E M E N T.

SCRIPTURAL PROOFS.

INSTEAD of beginning with any thing like speculation upon this subject, speaking first of the necessity of an atonement, and so finding our way into this great central truth as revealed in Scripture, we will follow the course which has been pursued with the other topics, and begin at once with the plain and simple declarations of the Bible with regard to a Sacrifice for the sin of the world. The use of reason in connection with this subject, and others like it, is, first of all, to ascertain whether it be revealed. This we do by interpreting the teachings of Scripture according to the acknowledged laws of language in any writing.

Christianity being the doctrine of Christ, the religion of Christ, a system of which Christ is the centre, we will suppose a stranger from a distant region, speaking our language, but totally ignorant of Christianity, to ask for one of our Sacred Books, which will most readily acquaint him with the essential truths of the Christian religion. We should, perhaps, select for him the Gospel by John. There is sufficient historical information in

it for his purpose, but, more peculiarly than in the other evangelists, every thing is made subservient to doctrine.

But who is this *John*? he would first inquire. — He was the beloved disciple of the great Founder of the Christian religion, enjoying peculiar opportunities to be intimately acquainted with the very heart of the system.

The stranger opens at John's Gospel and reads: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made." "And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."

Supposing this inquirer to be as honest and as humble as those who, having no theory to maintain, have in all ages agreed in the impression which these words have made upon them, we are sure that he will now say, Here is a disclosure of One who is evidently supernatural, who is associated with Deity, and who, it seems, became a man and dwelt familiarly among men.

But it seems he had a herald, divinely appointed, — "a man sent from God," "to bear witness" of this mysterious Being, "that all men through him might believe." It will be important to attend while the herald announces him. It seems that the people were expecting the coming of this heavenly visitor. They sent messages to the herald to know if he were the expected one, or whether He was yet to come. "The next day" the

herald "saw Jesus coming unto him," and he thereupon made this public annunciation: "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world." The next day he was standing with two of his disciples, when the Messiah again was in sight, and "looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God."

This was a remarkable designation. He at first called Him "Lamb of God." The expression seems metaphorical; perhaps he will explain it. But in his second annunciation of Him, and that in a more private way, evidently for the information of the two disciples then with him, he repeats the self-same word,— "Behold the Lamb of God."

The name by which a stranger is first made known in a community, we all know, is of special importance, and care is naturally taken that it should convey a definite and a correct idea of the individual who is to be the object of public attention.

Why, says our inquirer, did the herald affix to this mysterious One the title of "LAMB?"—He replies to himself, perhaps, that the word intimates innocence, meekness, mildness; and so, it may be, the meaning is, that this new messenger of God is one whose chief characteristic is innocence and meekness.

But this is not satisfactory; it does not meet all the requirements of the case. It gives an inadequate idea of him who is thus heralded. Innocence, meekness, mildness, are good qualities in their place, but they are not the working qualities of a character. A lord com-

missioner, or a plenipotentiary who should be announced at court as a lamb-like man, or a founder of a new system of philosophy or religion who should be characterized above all things as preëminently a harmless, mild character, would hardly be grateful to his herald for such an announcement, nor would he awaken proper expectations in the minds of men.

But soon the mysterious Being himself begins to speak and act. Our inquirer reads the conversation between him and Nathanael. He gets the impression of preternatural knowledge on the part of the Messiah. The conversation with Nicodemus ensues. The Great Teacher does not receive his confession of him, — “we know that thou art a teacher come from God,” — as sufficient, but proceeds to teach him the necessity of a supernatural change to be experienced by every man in order to be saved. He did not need to inform ‘a master in Israel’ with regard to the necessity of moral improvement in order to enter heaven, nor would Nicodemus then have ‘marvelled.’

Now the Great Teacher begins to assert his own supernatural origin. “And no man hath ascended into heaven but he that come down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven.” Here is food for thought; and the wonder is, how, or in what sense, this ‘Son of man’ is now in heaven while He is talking on earth with Nicodemus. But He proceeds, apparently, to announce some great purpose for which He came into the world: “And as Moses lifted up the serpent

in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have everlasting life." The impression seems to be conveyed that this Son of man is to do something by reason of which men "should not perish."

The mind of the inquirer recurs to the name by which the 'Son of man' was first announced, — "Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." What must the hearers of this annunciation have understood by this term? Was there any thing peculiar in their associations with the word 'Lamb'?

Their great national celebration had a lamb for its central object. It was a sacrifice. Its blood was the procuring cause of their salvation on that night which is "much to be remembered," when the destroying angel in Egypt saw the blood sprinkled on the lintel and door-posts of Israelitish dwellings, and passed over them when he cut off the first-born of the Egyptians. The death of an innocent victim was necessary to the salvation of the Hebrew household; in every one of them a lamb must bleed, or, if households were small, two might join and use the blood of the same lamb. This naturally gives our inquirer some new view of the divine character, — suffering, death, and blood being required of innocent victims to be the instrument of saving the lives of the first-born among nearly three millions of people, every ten of whom, upon an average, must take the life of one lamb, an almost incredible number of victims, therefore, bleeding and dying in one

night, to save the first-born of each Hebrew dwelling from death. The lamb would, therefore, naturally become, with the Jew, an emblem of sacrifice and substitution; so that when the Son of man was called "the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world," and his being "lifted up" was spoken of as that in consequence of which men "might not perish," it is easy to see that his sufferings and death were, in some way, to be a substitution for men.

Our inquiring friend anxiously turns to the account of the Messiah's death. He notes the stupendous miracles which accompanied it. The account of it by John is full of prophecies fulfilled. He tells us what "one Scripture saith," and another, and how it was fulfilled. Inquiring for these prophecies, the stranger is directed to Isaiah, and to the fifty-third chapter, which seems now to him like a description of the crucifixion itself by an eye-witness. He is also pointed to that passage where an Ethiopian eunuch, sitting in his chariot, is reading the same passage, and asks the Evangelist Philip, "I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? — of himself, or of some other man? Then Philip opened his mouth and began at the same scripture and preached unto him Jesus." Isaiah proceeds to say, "All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way, and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and by

his stripes we are healed." Turning over the prophets, the inquirer reads in Daniel, "And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off; but not for himself."

But He died. Was that the end of Him? Lo, He rises from the dead; He stands on a mountain with his friends: "All power is given unto me, in heaven and in earth;" "go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned." Is the commission executed? His Apostles begin to offer pardon in his name to all men; "neither," say they, "is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved." Has He appointed any ordinances? One;—it is a memorial of his death, with symbols of his body and blood, to be observed by all men until his final coming to judge all mankind at his bar.

But wonder upon wonder succeeds. The new religion and its friends being persecuted, the chief persecutor, in the full tide of his career, is arrested by a voice from heaven, is kindly treated, is made the preëminent friend and advocate of this Jesus and his religion. He writes to believers in Rome, and Corinth, Ephesus, Galatia, Thessaly, and Philippi. Here is a man who believes something, and positively; he declares this gospel to be essential to salvation, and that any perversion

of it subjects a man to the curse of God. "Though we or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed." That this might not seem an ill-considered expression, he repeats it, in the same words. Some of his converts in Galatia are seduced from the faith. He writes to them, and first establishes the proofs of his own apostleship, showing that he received it directly from Christ, not having seen the other apostles for three years after his conversion; and then he breaks out: "O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you." But he was not literally "crucified" in Galatia; he means, — The prominent idea of my preaching among you was the crucifixion of Christ; and he goes over the whole ground of salvation, and shows it to be not by merit, but by pardon and free justification through faith in the sufferings and death of the Son of God. He shows how that Abraham was justified by his faith; that "the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the Gospel unto Abraham;" that "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us;" and thus having expounded afresh the doctrine of salvation through a suffering Redeemer in this Epistle, which seems to have been written expressly for those who had begun to doubt respecting the atonement, he says, "Stand fast, there-

fore, in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free." "Christ is become of none effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law." — 'But is it so, that if we do as well as we can, and worship God according to the dictates of our consciences, and continue to be Jews in our practice, we may not be saved?' 'Not if you know better and disobey,' he seems to reply; 'and now I tell you the way of God more perfectly. "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."' "

The inquirer, we may suppose, is by this time satisfied as to what constitutes the distinguishing peculiarity of the Christian system; but, for confirmation, he is pointed to the Epistle to the Hebrews, where the doctrine is taken into the hands of a master, who, by the help of the long age of types and shadows, illustrates and enforces the doctrine of salvation by the sufferings and death of the Lamb of God. There is no writing which begins in a more elevated strain, and proceeds with a more majestic march, than this: "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; who, being the brightness of his glory and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high; being made so much better than the angels as he hath by

inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they." Then says he, "we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man." "For the suffering of death." Death, then, was not simply an incident, nor an accident, of his life, nor merely "the debt of nature;" but the great purpose of his coming was, to die. Not so with men; but this Infinite One became flesh to die. In pursuance of this fundamental truth, the writer turns the whole sacrificial dispensation, priest, altar, victim, into a prophecy of this death, and he makes it the end and fulfilment of the whole, as the flower or fruit is the accomplishment of a plant's life, or, to use his own inspired figure, as an object is the fulfilment of its shadow. In that one figure, of the "shadow," not used, be it observed, as a transient metaphor, but treated in an exhaustive manner, contrary to all rules as to the use of rhetorical figures when mere expression or rhetoric is the object in the writer's mind, he shows that the whole sacrificial system was a "shadow," with Christ and his atoning sacrifice behind it projecting that shadow. The Lamb of God and his sacrifice were coming; they threw their "shadow" before them; the shadow was, "sacrifices and offerings for sin"; if these were the "shadow" of "the things to come," of course the things to come were themselves "sacrifice and offering for sin," since the "shadow" must duly represent that which projects it.

It violates the most common laws of interpretation to a degree which could never be justified in ordinary speech, to represent the old dispensation as a system of sensuous observances constructed for the taste and capacity of a rude people, and Christianity as merely borrowing illustration from this old scheme to assist the understanding of the converts. No one can maintain this theory with any plausible arguments in the face of the following deliberate, studied declaration of the reverse: "For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us; nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with the blood of others; for then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world; but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. And as it is appointed unto all men once to die, but after that the judgment, so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many."

With the same particularity, the writer shows that the high-priest was the "shadow" of Christ; not that Christ the "teacher," the "example," the "guide," is presented by bold metaphors in accommodation to the old system, but that the great official personage of the old system was "shadow," "outline," thrown forward by a divine and infinite High Priest who, in the fulness of time, would atone and make intercession for us, "not

with the blood of others, but “by his own blood.” Not to quote further on this point, let us merely consider the literal emphatic assertion of the sufferings and death of Christ as being instead of sacrifices: “Wherefore, when he cometh into the world he said, Sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings thou wouldest not—but a body hast thou prepared me.—He taketh away the first that he may establish the second.—By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.”

The Apostle Peter speaks of the prophets as “searching what or what manner of time the *Spirit of Christ* which was in them did signify when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow.” He tells us we are “redeemed—with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.” “Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree:—by whose stripes ye were healed.”

So, as the inquirer turns the pages of the Epistles, he finds Christ, the atoning Saviour, alluded to in that common and incidental way which influences the mind of a candid reader as much as direct assertion. He began the inquiry with the beloved disciple. He comes to the last book of the Bible, and finds the same disciple finishing and sealing his testimony in exile. His book is full of the Son of God, on the throne of heaven, worshipped, the crowns of redeemed men at his feet, swaying the sceptre of universal empire, but still condescending, and saying to every child of Adam: “Behold,

I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." But what was the first impression which the first glimpse of Christ in heaven made on this seer? "And I beheld, and lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain."

Thus we have seen Christ announced to the world, at his appearing, as the Lamb of God. He was prophesied of as such, He declared himself to be such, He suffered and died, was preached, believed on, loved, and is adored in heaven, as Lamb of God. He was "lifted up" on a cross; He himself uses the double meaning in that expression to signify his exaltation as a Saviour, and as the object of universal worship.

It has also appeared in these scriptural representations of Christ that there is a view of Him, whatever it may be, which is declared to be essential to salvation. We must try every thing concerning Christ, therefore, by this test. This will help us to reduce the number of systems which are proposed for our acceptance. If one says of his system, You may believe it or not, and you will, in any event, be saved;—he does not speak like Christ and the Apostles. Honest endeavors in ignorance are accepted, but knowledge makes unbelief inexcusable. It will be well to bear this in mind in all our inquiries.

We have seen that atonement by sacrifice was the only way, formerly, of forgiving sin; we are expressly

informed that this was so. The following distinguishing passage makes emphatic mention of this by contrasting two things—the merely ceremonial, and the expiatory; —“and almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission,” — in which passage the absolute necessity of blood in atonement is in antithesis to the exceptional omission of it in mere purifications.

We have seen that Christ is expressly declared to be substituted for all such things; that he came in their place, as a thing approaching us supplants its shadow. We will next consider the nature of the atonement, to make which, as the fulfilment of all these things, was the great object of his coming.

X.

ATONEMENT.

CONTINUED.



X.

A T O N E M E N T—C O N T I N U E D.

ITS NATURE.

SOME, granting that atoning sacrifices for sin were a part of the former dispensation, take the ground that they were adapted to a rude state of society, but that in the present state of the world sacrifice for sin is as useless as they declare it to be repugnant.

That Christ directed his Gospel to be preached to every creature according to the Scriptures of the prophets, for the obedience of faith, among all nations, none will deny. But now the question arises as to the nature of the representations made in “the Scriptures of the prophets” concerning Christ. If any thing is palpably true, it is, that the writers of the New Testament, and Christ himself, are continually referring to the prophets as being “fulfilled” by Him. This were absurd if those prophets had themselves fulfilled their design in being outgrown by the age. But when Paul directs a young Christian minister as to his studies, he

places "all Scripture" before him as still "profitable," "that the man of God may be thoroughly furnished unto every good work."

It has been publicly said that "the New Testament should no more be bound in the same volume with the Old Testament, than a volume of American History with that of Herodotus." Paul was evidently of a different mind. The Old Testament was not, in his view, obsolete, for then he would have directed Timothy to wait for the New Testament before he began to preach Christ. An exploded system of astronomy would not now be given to students for a text-book, nor would a guide-book of travel, written before steam-power came into use, be thought suitable for modern travellers. All the disesteem and neglect of the Old Testament which prevail in some quarters at the present day, are not inappropriate if the ancient sacrifices, and the fundamental idea in them of atonement for sin, be outgrown by the world.

Turning to the few last verses of the first chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, we find Paul describing the moral condition of the world in his day. We have in these verses a description of the lands of Plato and Demosthenes, of Cicero and Seneca. The people of Greece and Rome surely prove that "culture" cannot bring men into a state of acceptance with God.

But in this Epistle, Paul tells us that he does not describe one age, nor one class of men; but that "no flesh shall be justified" before God on the ground of

their works; that "every mouth" may be "stopped," "and the whole world become guilty before God."

God alone can fix the terms of pardon. It is not for the transgressor against any law to determine whether he shall be forgiven, nor in what way.

And when God has appointed the way of forgiveness, it would be strange if there should not be, as there are in all other things connected with his administration over us, some things which are unfathomable. What relations to the other parts of his empire our forgiveness may have, we cannot tell, but involving, as it does, the principles of justice and mercy, regard must of course be had to other interests in the universe besides our own. The principle which lay at the foundation of ancient sacrifices was *substitution*;—the victim suffered in place of the sinner. This is called *vicarious* atonement, the word being derived from the Latin word *vice*,—*instead of*. When we speak of the sufferings of Christ being a *vicarious atonement*, we mean, they were *in the stead of* the sinner's punishment, and not merely for example and persuasion.

But what proportion is there between the death of a ram, a lamb, a scape-goat, and sin? Surely, none; we are expressly told that the blood of bulls and of goats could never take away sin; for then, the Apostle says, they "would not have ceased to be offered." This is a conclusive proof that they were employed, while they continued, in connection with the forgiveness of sin, but were, for some reasons, incomplete, or not in

themselves efficacious. They were, nevertheless, the occasion, and one of the terms, of pardon.

Now we come again to the question whether these sacrifices, and the principle involved in them, of the substituted suffering of others in the place of the sinner, were annihilated, no more to come into mind except as helpful illustrations to people in a transition state from the "gross practices" of sacrifice to the "higher culture" of a more refined age? All such phraseology and the ideas contained in it involve the melancholy error that we have advanced in morality beyond the Hebrews, and that human nature now is more refined and cultivated. Paul, in return, declares that the Hebrews are no "better" than the Gentiles. "What then, are we better than they? No, in no wise; for we have before proved, both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin." His object in saying this, which he insists upon and establishes with such demonstrative evidence, is, to show that all nations and all ages alike need the principle of vicarious atonement in their intercourse with God, however superior some may be to the rest at carving in marble and painting in oils; and that God deals with them all upon this principle when He forgives their sins. Instead of its being annihilated, he shows that the principle of substitution, or vicariousness, was set forth by the use of victims under the law for the purpose of preparing the world for the better understanding and higher appreciation of it in the offering up of "the body of Jesus Christ once for

all." We may, if we choose, set aside the Epistles of Paul as erroneous, or as propounding sentiments which are obnoxious to what are called the human instincts, as, for example, that God cannot forgive sin without an atoning sacrifice; but that Paul declares Christ and his death to be a fulfilment, the carrying out, of the principle, applying to all times and to all conditions of men, is manifest, unless he utterly fails as a master of language by overloading his meaning with cumbrous metaphors, drawn, too, from that which some now say is repugnant to the instincts of well-informed human nature.

But granting that Paul meant to teach that the principle of sacrifice for sin was to be perpetual, through the sufferings and death of Christ (reserving the further proof of this for another place), How is the death of Christ an atonement? And what propriety is there in it? How could his sufferings and death be an equivalent for the punishment of sin, or a substitution for perfect obedience to the law? How is this consistent with the parental character of God? Do fathers deal with their children on such a principle? These questions are continually rising in the thoughts of many in connection with this subject. Let them be considered candidly and patiently.

The doctrine is this: The sufferings and death of Jesus Christ are a substitution for the endless punishment of all who truly believe on Him.

This is a simple proposition. There is no mystery

in the doctrine until we attempt to inquire into things connected with it which are not revealed. All which is essential to salvation is as simple and plain as was the laying of the sinner's hand upon the head of the victim, and offering up the victim's life, which, by God's appointment, was instead of the punishment which the sinner should have suffered. We cannot view the scriptural representations of the sufferings and death of Christ too literally; indeed, Jesus Christ is more literally and more fully a substitution for the sinner than a victim could ever be; so that instead of feeling jealous of ourselves lest we strain the emblem and push the type too far, we ought rather to fear lest we withhold somewhat from a perfect acceptance of Christ, as, in all respects, dying for us, redeeming us by his blood. Let it be repeated, nothing can be more literally a substitution for another than the sufferings and death of Christ are for our punishment.

On a hill near Jerusalem, One dies by crucifixion. That death is the ground on which God has ever pardoned sin and will pardon it. The "Lamb," we are told, was "slain from the foundation of the world;" — the meaning is, — the government of the world began with the atonement in view; it was administered from the beginning under the influence of the atonement to be made by Christ.

Whoever feels that he is a sinner and seeks forgiveness, must confess that he is lost and ruined, and he must ask for pardon on the ground of the Saviour's

sufferings and death on his behalf. Doing this, he is freely and fully forgiven. To illustrate this, we may take a dying malefactor, who, in despair of all other help, throws himself upon his Redeemer, even while the fatal cord is round his neck, or his hands and feet are nailed to a cross. Believing in that moment in Christ as the substitute for his endless punishment and the procuring cause of pardon through his sufferings and death, the malefactor receives forgiveness as freely and fully as he who in health and strength repents, and has a life before him in which to testify his obligations. Such is salvation by grace, through faith. This we understand to be the Gospel. It is level to the comprehension of the dying child; it has mysteries "into which angels desire to look." It was this which gave all their efficacy to ancient sacrifices; they derived their value from it, as truly as a bank note derives its value and currency from the coin which it represents. Few think of that coin while they are using the paper note, and fewer still understand the connection between the two; so it may have been with many who offered sacrifices,—they may not have understood clearly their relation to that which gave those sacrifices their value and efficiency.

But it will be said, "May we not be allowed to ask, without being accounted sceptical, and without wishing to intrude into things beyond human knowledge, how the sufferings and death of one human being are, in any sense, an atonement and propitiation for the sin of the whole world?"

Is Christ “a human being” and no more? Now we shall perceive that the question of his Deity is not a useless speculation, but that it has infinite importance. Who is dying upon yonder cross? Should God tell us that He will accept the sufferings and death of a mere man as an atonement for sin, we could properly make no objection. Reason must judge of the evidence which establishes such a disclosure; but how or why it could be so, is a question which might not be submitted to our judgment.

We assume that which we have heretofore endeavored to prove, namely, that the Lord Jesus Christ is Supreme, underived Deity in one of its incomprehensible distinctions, united with a perfect man,—two natures in one person; and that this one Person made atonement by voluntarily suffering the death of the cross. Very many things were contributory to this, such as his humbling himself to be made flesh, his obedience, his sufferings; but his dying is the one essential act by which he atoned for sin.

We rely for proof of this on such passages as these: “For God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” — “The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.” “Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood.” “In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins.” “While we were

yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." "God commendeth his love toward us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us." "Being justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him." He "loved me, and gave himself for me." "Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold,—but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish." "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain;"—"Thou art worthy, for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation."

The Scriptures enter into no explanations on this subject. We are told, indeed, that this propitiation was made "that God might be just and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." We are everywhere taught the displeasure of God against sin, and are told that it was "Jesus that delivered us from the wrath to come;"—that "we shall be saved from wrath through him;" that he that believeth in the Son "shall not come into condemnation." And we are constantly assured that God provided this way of saving us; that it was because "He so loved the world;" and the contrast is drawn between man and fallen angels;—"for verily he took not on him the nature of angels" (literally, he did not lay hold of angels), "but the seed of Abraham." The sinner is encouraged to approach God, because "God is in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them;" and it is said, "having, therefore, brethren, boldness to enter

into the holy of holies by the blood of Jesus, — let us draw near.”

It is wrong to think of God as implacable, and of Christ as interposing and prevailing upon Him to let Him take the sinner's place; nor are we to think of Christ as having taken us out of the hands of an angry Judge, and that to Christ alone we owe our pardon; that God was a stern creditor who needed to be satisfied, and that Christ was our true friend who kindly discharged the claim.

The death of Christ was not the procuring cause of willingness on the part of God to forgive sin; it was the means chosen and appointed by God himself by which it would be consistent for Him to forgive sin.

It is nowhere represented as the object of the atonement to make God willing to pardon. A great mistake is often made in so representing it. The Bible, like other books, employs dramatic representations to impress the truth most forcibly upon the mind. The second Psalm, which represents a colloquy between the Father and the Son, and the tenth of Hebrews, where the Son addresses the Father, and other well-known instances, are illustrations of the same thing. But the truth which underlies all this, is, that “God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son.” “And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world.”

The importance of this representation, namely, that redemption is the work of the Father equally with

the Son, is seen when we reflect how singular it would be, and what a proof of earnest love toward us, for one at variance with us to go and make arrangements for reconciliation. Complying with his offered terms of peace, we could neither say nor feel that he had been prevailed upon to be reconciled; and therefore we see, if God provided a way of pardon, that He is "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."

Nothing is more repugnant to many than the idea of an "atonement" for sin,—that God should be represented as needing it in order to forgive; that it should have consisted in such a dreadful sacrifice, the surrender of "the only-begotten" and "well-beloved Son;" that his sufferings and death should be regarded as an equivalent for the punishment of sinners; and that the want of personal righteousness should in any sense be compensated for by the acts of another.

Yet it is not denied that the phraseology of the New Testament abounds with such representations; and the explanation of some is, that Jewish writers naturally fell into that way of expressing themselves from having been long addicted to sacrificial observances. It is said that they could not be expected to abandon those associations of ideas which were interwoven with their religious practices; that if they endeavored to lay them aside they would still tincture their thoughts; their writings would continue to show the ritualistic school in which their authors had been trained.

There is one complete answer to this in the mind of every one who can understand and appreciate the character of the Apostle Paul. No trait in that noble man is more conspicuous and more wonderful than his perfect deliverance from all Jewish prejudices and attachments. Never was there an instance, perhaps, in which the human mind was so completely exorcised of all denominational bias and of preferences for old, familiar habits lingering about the mind and projecting their hues upon any subjects which happened to be in hand. His protestations to those whom he addresses with regard to the utter inefficiency of the ancient sacrifices and ritual observances of every kind in our approaches to God, show that he did not still think in the old channels through invincible attachment or even habit. Indeed, we could prove this in another way. We might confidently ask, Would Paul go to the Romans and preach Judaism? No more than he would address them in Hebrew. His doctrine was that Judaism was superseded by Christianity; would he employ the symbols of a system which he was trying to put aside while seeking to insinuate the new religion into those to whom Judaism was abhorrent? Yet to the Romans he speaks of the sufferings and death of Christ precisely as though he were speaking to Jews. So in addressing the Galatians and the Ephesians, and, which is still more noticeable, the Corinthians. For we know that Corinth, "the eye of Greece," was in Paul's day the city of lecturers

and schools in every department of learning and art, and that as to all possible forms of pleasure it was the Paris of the pagan world. But Paul says to the Corinthians, "And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God, for I determined not to know any thing among you save Jesus Christ and him crucified." In view of such considerations it is difficult to see how an intelligent man can think that the New Testament is, in its sacrificial language, merely an accommodation to ancient and exploded rites.

Take such a passage as the chapter in Romans which begins thus: "Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Then it is shown how by one man we fell, and how by one man we were redeemed; "who was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification." "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died." — "When we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son." — "When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." — "For scarcely for a righteous man will one die," — "but" — "while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." — "Being justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him." — To the Corinthians he says, "I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures." Think of such

things being said in Rome and Corinth, such perpetual allusions to the death, the sufferings, and the blood of Christ, if all which the writer meant was the moral precepts, or the example, or the doctrines, of Christ. He has professedly repudiated Judaism; he would not be constantly using, nor obtruding upon his fastidious hearers, the symbols of the system which had been done away. And therefore, when we find him constantly insisting upon the sufferings, the death, the blood of the Son of God, as the foundation of pardon and salvation, it must be that it is because these are literally the ground of acceptance with God, the old system having been designedly in preparation for it, and the language of its ritual being still the most impressive mode of conveying to the human mind vivid conceptions of the way to be saved.

A modern scheme of "Atonement," which is frequently proposed to explain the scriptural representations, is this: God is willing to pardon sin upon the ground of repentance alone. He therefore appointed Christ to come as his special messenger; and after a life of spotless purity, and having set a perfect example, and leaving to the world a perfect system of morals and instructions concerning the true character of God, he died in attestation of all, showing thereby his love to us, and the Father's love to us, and so assuring us that God is perfectly willing to pardon sin upon repentance.

This scheme makes the death of Christ merely an

incident, though an important one, in his work. The Scriptures evidently reverse this order. It is his death which has the preëminence. He "came — to give his life a ransom for many." We "have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins." We "are sanctified by the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." He "washed us from our sins in his own blood." We might fill pages with such phraseology. To call it "metaphor," "accommodation," "mere Jewish phrases," is not to deal with language as we do in every other case. We always regard the figurative language of one who is in earnest as indicating an effort to express most vividly and forcibly the meaning which the figures naturally convey. We never reject the figurative, impassioned words of a man as mere metaphor.

Neither does it do justice to the abounding phraseology of Scripture on this subject to say that Christ died in the cause of mankind, like a patriot, or martyr. To see this, let us but substitute the name of Stephen, for example, in passages which speak of Christ as dying for us, redeeming us by his blood. All would at once feel the inconsistency in so doing.

In reply to the representation that an atonement was necessary to make it consistent for God to pardon, it is said that instead of being necessary in any way to enable the divine Ruler to pardon us, it was we who needed to be reconciled, and therefore the only effect which the death of Christ was intended to have upon

us, was, to make us willing, not to assist the divine administration. "Be *ye* reconciled to God." Hence, it is said, the atonement is merely an *at-one-ment*, a means to persuade us to be reconciled.

The use of the term "*reconciled*," by Christ himself, shows us that it is properly applied to the offending party when not he, but the offended one, needs to be satisfied. The argument just quoted is, that God does not need the atonement, because it is we who are called upon to be "reconciled" to God. But Christ says to an offender, in the case of variance with another,—"if thy brother hath aught *against thee*, leave there thy gift before the altar, and go and be reconciled to thy brother." This, be it observed, assumes that *to satisfy another* is being "reconciled" to him. Hence we may be said to be "reconciled to God by the death of his Son" when satisfaction is made to God for our offences. In being "reconciled" to our brother, it is not enough that we lay aside our enmity,—we must make satisfaction to him.

But many protest that it is not consistent with proper conceptions of God to think of Him as needing any thing to make it suitable for Him to forgive. In saying this, we assume too much for our finite understanding. God must tell us whether it is consistent to forgive sin without an equivalent for its penalty. If He requires a sacrifice, or if He provides one, in order that He may forgive, He does no more now than when He told the friends of Job that his wrath was kindled against

them, and that they must go to his servant Job, who would offer sacrifices in their behalf. Let us not be found prescribing to our Maker on what principles He shall govern the world. Let not a sinner dictate the terms and the method of forgiveness.

But some say that this whole plan of atonement makes confusion in their conceptions concerning the Godhead. The Father sends the Son to atone; but the Son is God equally with the Father and the Holy Spirit.

It may be useful to apply here the remark which was made in connection with the doctrine of the Trinity, that instead of wondering that we are confused by any conceptions of God, the wonder should be that the most simple conception of Him does not discompose our minds. For there is as much, to say the least, to confound us in the thought of existence without any beginning, as there can be in any thing which may be revealed concerning Him. If one is troubled by the thought of a distinction of persons in the Godhead, let him reflect if it be less overwhelming and distracting to think of an Infinite God who always was, and of whose being there can be said to have been no cause. This contradicts all our experience and observation; and there is nothing within us which answers to it.

We must therefore resort to revelation on this subject. Finding, as we have endeavored to show in previous lectures, that there is that which we call a distinction in the Godhead, we are certainly assisted by it in seeing how an atonement can be made. We refer now

mere y to our conceptions respecting the subject, and we say that, if sin could not be forgiven without an atonement, it is difficult to see how an atonement could be made, which could be in its nature divine, unless there were some personal distinction in the Godhead. The idea would, however, be more suitably expressed, if we say that the personal distinctions in the Godhead make it seem practicable that a divine atonement should be made. We do not speculate, nor offer conjectures on this great mystery of godliness. We are to take the facts as they appear in the New Testament, which seem to us to be these, that of the Three who are One God, One (whether from original causes related to his divine nature as distinguished from that of the Two, we cannot tell) acts as Lawgiver, and represents to our conceptions God, without reference to personal distinctions. That it is a "Person" of the Godhead who thus acts, has strong confirmation in the fact that the Saviour does not use the word *God* in addressing Him, but usually *Father*; moreover, it is noticeable that Paul, in speaking of God and Christ in connection with each other, very frequently adds the word *Father* to the word *God*. He does not speak of "God and Christ," but it is, for example, "God, even the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ." We do not see that the offices which the Father fills are in consequence of any original superiority in nature, inasmuch as all divine attributes, names, works and worship, are ascribed equally to the Three.

The Father being, officially, GOD, for the purposes of redemption, the Second Person becomes the Redeemer, acting in subordination to the Father; and the Holy Spirit in subordination to both, as the great administrator in the work of redemption. This personal distinction makes incarnation practicable, while it leaves, on the throne of heaven, to our apprehension, One whom we may still regard as Supreme Deity, whose law is violated, who makes provision for pardon, who sends his Son, who receives confession, and repentance, and submission. We must not say that redemption could not be made were there but One Person in the Godhead; but we do say that the system of redemption which is thus represented in the Scriptures as employing the Sacred Three is to our minds infinitely sublime, as well as beautifully appropriate, awakening in us every affecting and ennobling sentiment of which our nature is capable. It must not be forgotten that in saying this we do not speculate; we do not insist that things must be as they are, and that they cannot be otherwise; but we take them as they appear to us in the Bible, and we see in them the "depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God."

And we certainly go very far beyond our measure when we think to show how it is, in the nature of things, that the sufferings and death of Christ are the most appropriate method of making an atonement for sin. No doubt they are so, or something better would

have been employed; but, alas! for our presumption, if we think to sit in judgment upon the divine plan, pronouncing either that the scheme is imperfect, or, on the other hand, that it is, *because we so judge*, the best which could be devised.

Though we cannot say, from our own power of comparison and judging, that this method of atonement was, in the nature of things, the best which was possible, we see reasons for regarding it as infinitely wise and good.

He who becomes the Redeemer "was in the beginning with God, and was God." This lays the foundation for confidence; it makes men feel that "their Redeemer is mighty;" whatever He promises and undertakes is guaranteed by his infinite strength, with which all other divine attributes associate themselves to fulfil all the good pleasure of his will. Men readily pray to Him; in moments of shipwreck and sudden fear, for example, it is perfectly natural to call on Christ for help; and this without any process of reasoning going beforehand, but because the Saviour has already commended himself to the confidence of the soul through the revelations made in the Bible respecting his Godhead.

If such a Being goes to the cross for us, we feel that there is in his view an importance in our salvation warranting his interposition; if He interposes, we feel that an adequate provision is made for our necessities, and, moreover, that He is able to carry into effect his design on our behalf.

We also feel that not only are our interests regarded and provided for, but, which we perceive to be more important, the divine character and the interests of the divine government are most fully considered. For this Redeemer is not one who, touched with sympathy, has interfered to save us without due regard to other interests ; He is God, and will take care that the divine glory and all the interests of the universe are included when He acts in behalf of one portion of his creatures. If He has seen it wise and good thus to become our Saviour, it must be that He himself will be honored by it, and therefore that it will promote the happiness and welfare of other beings, so that forming a part of the great plan of divine government, we perceive that our salvation through this Divine Mediator, in union with the Father and the blessed Spirit, is and must necessarily be a plan in which the Godhead is engaged, and if so, man, the sinner, becomes an object of divine regard to a degree which exalts him to a condition far above that from which he fell.

Compare with this, as a foundation for confidence and joy, the sinner's own consciousness of being sorry for sin and his trust in the general or even specific promises of pardon to the penitent, which promises, his conscience tells him, he forfeits every day by imperfection and sin. We need some ground of hope and confidence out of ourselves. Our repentance and our purposes of reformation, and our endeavors after goodness, are no sufficient ground for peace and com-

fort; they are rather like a sand-hill to the feet of the weary. But this train of remark is related to the subject of repentance as a supposed ground of pardon and salvation, which is a topic of sufficient importance to be considered by itself, inasmuch as the acceptableness of repentance alone without atonement is the theory which is most generally maintained by those who reject the sacrifice of Christ.

A few things will be stated here on which there is not room to dwell.

Pardon and justification are not synonymous. A prisoner pardoned is not thereby "justified." One is "justified" whom the law pronounces "not guilty." "Who shall *lay any thing to the charge* of God's elect? It is God that *justifieth*." "Justification is an act of God's free grace, wherein He pardoneth all our sins, and *accepteth us as righteous* in his sight."—This act of justifying us, in addition to pardon, is among the wonders of redemption.

Again. There is no transfer of character from Christ to us; nor from us as sinners to Christ when suffering for us; but an *imputation*—not an *infusion*—of merit and demerit.

Again. While the atonement shows the benevolence of God, promotes holiness, and does many things connected with moral government, none of these are the primary object of atonement. That object is, *To satisfy divine justice*. Let no human philosophy make

us lose sight of this essential object of the Saviour's death.

The important subject of the extent which it was intended that the Atonement should have in actually saving men, belongs rather to the doctrine of Election. But the question as to its design with regard to all mankind, is in place here. If Christ did not suffer and die for all mankind, past, present, and to come, saved or lost, the plainest and most explicit language of the Bible misleads the unsuspecting and honest reader. But, in the most approved statements of doctrine by those who hold to what is called 'Limited Atonement,' there is absolutely nothing which conflicts with this great truth. They tell us that limited atonement refers to the design of the Saviour's death and not to its nature; that its nature is infinite, that it is competent for the salvation of all mankind. But they ask, What was the design of Christ in dying? Are we not to learn this by finding what it will actually accomplish? And what is this but the salvation of those who shall be saved? If one says, 'Limited Atonement, then, means only that it will be limited in its application,' they reply, But it was limited as to its original design; Christ died for his people in a sense in which He did not suffer for the lost; if all were to be lost, would Christ have died?

They tell us that this view of the 'design' in the infinite sacrifice of Christ strengthens the whole system of truth,—confirming the doctrine of Election, exalt-

ing the nature of 'Special Grace,' and wonderfully enhancing the love of Christ for his people.

This subject, when in controversy, arrays good men on opposite sides, one side being jealous lest any limit should be given to the Saviour's death as a propitiation for the sins of the whole world, and the other side maintaining that to fail of distinguishing between the "infinite nature" and the "particular design" of the atonement is to make it a mere 'exhibition,' instead of an absolute substitution, — and many other objections of the same kind. The subject is well discussed by Turretin, Vol. II., and by Andrew Fuller, Vol. II., Conversation 3. Mr. Fuller sums up the views of some zealous contestants by saying, in the person of an umpire, "The difference between you ought not to prevent your feeling towards and treating each other as brethren. You are agreed in all the great doctrines of the Gospel, as, the necessity of an atonement, the ground of acceptance with God, salvation by grace only, etc., etc., and with respect to 'particular redemption,' you both admit the thing." Your seeming difference "may be owing either to a difference in your manner of expressing yourselves, or to the affixing of consequences to a principle which yet are unperceived by him that holds it. You are both erring mortals, but both, I trust, the sincere friends of the Lord Jesus. Love one another."

XI.

ATONEMENT.

CONTINUED

19 *



XI.

ATONEMENT—CONTINUED.

INSUFFICIENCY OF REPENTANCE—CONCLUSION.

IT is a mistake to suppose that repentance and innocence are equivalent. No honest man will offer a thing which has been badly damaged, however thoroughly it may have been repaired, as a new article. Repentance cannot make it the same as though a man had not sinned. Laws have been broken, the eternal principles of righteousness have been violated; being sorry for this, and abstaining from it in future, cannot recall nor alter the deed. If there were such a thing as a meter to mark and record a violation of the moral law, it would make its everlasting record when a sin was committed, and no change of conduct on the part of the sinner could cancel it any more than a change of temperature can blot out the record of the self-registering barometer.

How God will consent to regard the sinner in view of his sin, is a different question. But even should he treat him as though he were innocent,

this does not annihilate his having sinned. Hence the idea that repentance restores the soul to innocence is without foundation; the thing is impossible. And all which can be done is to treat the sinner as though he had not sinned. Will the Most High so treat sinful men? If so, on what grounds and conditions?

Some are ready with this answer: Repentance restored the prodigal son to the love of his father. Christ intimates by the parable that repentance will have the same effect for us with God.

It would be unreasonable to expect that every truth of religion would be inculcated, or even brought to view, in every part of Scripture. If Paul is discoursing on the resurrection of the body, we are not disappointed if he does not introduce the subject of charity. If he is illustrating charity, we do not expect to have our attention drawn to the necessity and duty of repentance. If Christ is teaching us how God feels toward penitent sinners, it may not be consistent with unity, or with the highest effect in the discourse, to dwell at all, in that place, upon other principles concerned in the forgiveness of sin. Provided he says nothing inconsistent with the belief that there are other principles involved, we are satisfied to look elsewhere in order to complete our knowledge of that subject. The mind of Christ was filled with the great theme of love toward returning sinners, sinners of the Gentiles, and also sinners of the lowest orders among the Jews who were pressing to hear him, while the Pharisees and Scribes murmured

at him. If the Saviour did not then enunciate the doctrine of atonement, the question will arise, Did he elsewhere teach it? and if he did, He is the best judge when and how to enforce it.

Since it is often said that the parable of the prodigal son contains no allusion to the idea of atonement, it may be well to say, that the idea is certainly brought to view in a form which, with some, is the highest possible proof of its truth,—it being evidently demanded by the “instincts” of the prodigal himself. He did not say, ‘Father, inasmuch as repentance is the only and the sufficient ground of pardon, see, I have repented and returned; I wait, therefore, to be reinstated in my privileges as a son.’ Instead of this, he craved atonement for his sin;—“make me as one of thy hired servants.”—This is, perhaps, as good an answer as the objection referred to requires.

But it will be said, ‘Does a good father repulse a sobbing child who is thoroughly penitent, by telling him, I cannot forgive you unless your innocent brother makes some satisfaction to me and to the family for your sin?’

If we insist that the relation between God and man is strictly identical with the parental and filial relation, we shall find it difficult to maintain that theory. The analogy soon fails; it holds only under certain conditions. To show how utterly inapplicable it is in its wide extent, let us recall an illustration already given. Would an earthly father, at the first transgression of a married

son, expel him and his wife from their home, curse the ground which they were to till, set armed guards around their former habitation, entail sorrow upon them, till death, his own infliction, should close the scene? Such is the inspired account of the treatment of our Heavenly Father's first children by his own hand. Surely there is imperfection in the analogy of earthly and divine parentage; the resemblance is greatly qualified. God and man sustain other relations than those of parent and child.

The truth with regard to the necessity of atonement or satisfaction to law and justice, in human affairs, seems to be, that as the circle widens, atonement appears to be indispensable. A father may safely forgive a penitent child, now and then, without inflicting punishment, or requiring any thing in the nature of a sin-offering. In a school it becomes more hazardous to do so; in a college it is still more dangerous; in the army, or navy, it is exceedingly rare, in the State it cannot be permitted. Then the law must pronounce its sentence, judgment must proceed unless arrested by the Executive. It is obvious that men at large are governed by the Most High in view of their public relations to Him, such as a child cannot sustain to a parent. Surely, His judgments prove it; and his afflicting hand in our private experience sets at nought our ideas of analogy between His government and that of earthly parents.

It is not, therefore, good reasoning for one to remind us that if a child comes to a parent with repentance,

the parent does not require a brother to offer up his happiness or endure pain for him. Let the child grow up ; let the father be a magistrate ; let this son be brought before him for arson, or highway robbery ; their relation to each other will then be more like that of God and the sinner.

In the treatment of our first parents by their heavenly Father we see how unsafe it is to propose what we call our "instincts" as a rule for the divine conduct. We need divine revelation to instruct these instincts when they propose to guide us in the knowledge of God.

For example, when it is said, One does not need that an older child should interpose and suffer in order to prevail on a good father to pardon a penitent, we turn to the Bible, and we find it written : "My little children, these things write I unto you that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And he is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world." We do not read in this passage that nothing but repentance is necessary if we sin ; we are told of "an advocate with the Father," and "a propitiation," made by one who contemplates "the whole world" of mankind as in need of 'advocacy' with God, and of 'propitiation,' — not to persuade God, not to propitiate Him as being now indisposed to forgive, but, by the appointment of the Father, doing that which makes it consistent for God to pardon and save us.

Repentance is indispensable to pardon. We cannot be saved by it, but we cannot be saved without it. God has prescribed it as one of the conditions on which he will forgive sin.

The objection to repentance as the ground of forgiveness, is, It does not secure perfect obedience to God. In many things we continue to offend; in all we come short; and the law of God requires perfectness in him who would be saved by obedience. Grant for a moment that repentance procures from God full pardon for sin, as it does in a family. What would happen if a forgiven child should sin again, in the very same way, and as often, as we sin against God in thought, word, and deed? Repentance in a child is supposed to restore him not merely to his father's favor but also to obedience. Our repentance, alas! has no power to secure us against repeated and continual sins of omission and commission. Especially if we remember that sin is any want of conformity unto, as well as transgression of, the law of God, we shall perceive that sorrow and reformation, however sincere and thorough, leave us bankrupt to divine justice; "for who can understand his errors?" "there is none that doeth good, no, not one." Whether divine justice will compound with us for our many sins, on the ground of such repentance as we exercise, and in doing so violate every known analogy in every relation in which men stand to one another, is a question to which even reason must give a negative answer, while Revelation furnishes this explicit

statement: "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God. Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past through the forbearance of God; to declare I say at this time his righteousness that He might be just and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus."

To strengthen this view, let it be observed, that if God cannot now consistently forgive sin without an atonement, it is natural to infer that He never could, and never did. But the blood and the life of an animal could not make God propitious; they did not change his feelings, they did not furnish an equivalent for the injury committed. Hence we infer that their efficacy was due to that which in the fulness of time took their place — the sufferings and death of Him who by one offering "forever perfected them that are sanctified," and "ever liveth to make intercession for us."

But were there no good and perfect men in all the past ages since the fall, who stood on their own righteousness as the ground of acceptance with God? We know what emblazonry of illustrious names and deeds there is in the eleventh of Hebrews, where patience as well as obedience seem to be presented in their most perfect human forms. With regard to none of these worthies was it true that they were justified by their good deeds? that is, were none of them saved on the same principle

that Adam once stood, and on which angels now stand, namely, perfect obedience to the law of God?

There is a conclusive answer to this question: God has from the beginning appointed sacrifices for sin. This, if it can be shown, will help us to decide the question on what ground we are to look for pardon and justification with God.

There is no satisfactory way of accounting for the slaughter of animals previous to the flood, unless we believe in the offering of animal life in sacrifice for sin. Animal food was not granted to Adam. His food is indicated to him by the Most High in these words: "Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree in which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat." The grant of animal food was made to Noah, showing that it had not been previously allowed: "Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you; even as the green herb have I given you all things."

The large flocks and herds mentioned previously to the flood, it is maintained by some, are an argument against this view; but their necessary supply of milk and wool will sufficiently account for their great numbers. Yet, it is further said, a distinction between clean and unclean beasts, was made when Noah entered the ark. But, 1. This distinction may have been made in written form for those who understood the difference in following generations. It is, in the language of the

rhetoricians, a case of *prolepsis*,— something said by anticipation. 2. The distinction may have been made on entering the ark with a view to the subsequent use of animals for food. 3. The distinction may have been made to Noah, in reference to the use of animals in sacrifice, indicating which should be acceptable. A confirmation of this appears, when it is said, “And Noah builded an altar unto the Lord, and took of every clean beast and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt offerings on the altar.”

It does not seem possible that the idea of worshipping God by slaughtering animals could have suggested itself to the human mind. Here is one proof that our “instincts” are not the test of truth nor the rule of duty. God directed and accepted those sacrifices, and we must therefore conclude that the idea of shedding blood as an atonement for sin was divinely revealed. On account of its prominence in the Old Testament, more than for any other reason, many among us repudiate those Scriptures, and, of course, they repudiate with them the idea that the death of the Son of God is an atonement for sin. They call the doctrine, “Blood Theology.” But ‘*almost all* things were by the law *cleansed* with blood;’ and this exceptional mode of statement gives force to the declaration which follows, namely, “and without shedding of blood is no remission.”

Now we come to the written appointment, by the Most High, of the way in which he would forgive sin, the time having arrived when the usages and observ-

ances before existing were to be codified. There were many gifts, and there were sacrifices of many kinds, and for various purposes. But we find prominent among them this appointment: "And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, If a soul sin" — (then follow the specifications of fraud, theft, false-swearing) "he shall bring his trespass offering unto the Lord, a lamb without blemish out of the flock, — and the priest shall make an atonement for him before the Lord, and it shall be forgiven him for any thing of all that he hath done in trespassing therein." Repentance, it seems, was not enough. The offering of the lamb was not in the way of a fine. The priest must take it and make atonement with it before the Lord.

All the questions which are so often asked in objecting to the Saviour's sacrifice, might here be raised: In what sense can the death of a lamb be an equivalent for a sin? Why cannot God forgive a penitent sinner without putting an innocent victim to death? How is it consistent with the goodness of God to take the life of a lamb when a man has sinned? The only answer which can properly be given is, God saw fit to ordain sacrifices in connection with the forgiveness of sin. This we see still more clearly when we notice the reason which God assigns for prohibiting the use of blood for food: "And whatsoever man there be of the house of Israel, or of the strangers that sojourn among you, that eateth any manner of blood, I will even set my face against that man, and will cut him off from

among his people. For the life of the flesh is in the blood; and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your sins; for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul. Therefore I said unto the children of Israel, No soul of you shall eat blood, neither shall any stranger that sojourneth among you."

Here, among other things, we see that offerings for sin are not gifts, nor are they payments, nor fines; it is not the costliness of the animal that constitutes the satisfaction made by the sinner to God; but it is the blood, worthless in itself, and yet most precious as a sign of a life sacrificed. This is atonement, and God appointed it; for four thousand years the lives of innocent creatures were taken whenever sin was to be forgiven; and it is only for about eighteen hundred years that this method of obtaining pardon has not been employed. Should all the victims which have died for the sins of men be driven in flocks and herds, through a principal street of this city, they would be several years in passing by.

Was all this nothing but "ignorance," "grossness," "superstition," "accommodation to a weak infancy of mankind?"

The doctrine of substitution as the ground of pardon, was taught by the Scape-goat. If it be derogatory to the character of God now, to say that he cannot forgive the sin of a penitent without a sacrifice, appointed and accepted by Him, then this solemn and impressive

ceremony of the scape-goat made an injurious impression. If, however, the Saviour of the world was to be, in the fulness of time, a sacrifice for sin, and God was educating the world with reference to Him in whom all the prophecies and the ritual observances of preceding ages were to have their fulfilment, we perceive divine wisdom and beauty in all the appointments of the sacrificial dispensation.

Questions like the following frequently arise in an inquiring mind: Are we to regard sacrifices as making the Most High propitious? do they affect his feelings in any way toward the sinner? and if this be the theory of sacrifice, how is it consistent with the perfections of God?

No one supposes, of course, that the sacrifice of life persuades the Almighty to be favorable to men, nor that there is any thing like equivalency between a transgression and the life of an animal. We account for the appointment of sacrifices only by adopting, as it seems to us, the plain representations of Scripture on that point, for it is not a subject on which human reason could give us any original information.

The race having sinned against God, He purposes to pardon sin, remitting the penalty and restoring the sinner to holiness in a way consistent with justice, by the sacrifice of one who is called the Son of God, who was in the beginning with God and was God, and who became flesh that he might experience death. He who accepts this way of pardon is saved, only and

wholly through faith, without merit. Thus the sufferings and death of the Son of God are in the place of a sinner's punishment. Why the Son of God was not manifested immediately upon the fall instead of four thousand years afterward, is among the inscrutable things of God. For four thousand years, men were pardoned on the ground of the coming sacrifice for sin, "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world;" by which expression of Scripture we are taught that the government of the world began and proceeded with the atonement in view. But instead of making known the person and offices of the Redeemer, God appointed the shedding of blood, the blood of animals, in connection with the pardon of sin. He has not seen fit to give us his reasons; we only know that 'without shedding of blood is no remission.'

This is repugnant to our natural hearts. The very thing which makes it necessary, makes it distasteful. We are in need of pardon, and we need to feel it, and sacrifice in our behalf makes us feel it; but we dislike both the truth that we need it, and the way in which it is administered.

Sacrifice makes us feel the ill-desert of sin; and by offering up the life of an innocent creature in the stead of his own soul, the sinner confesses that he deserved the death which by God's appointment he inflicts on the victim. So when he looks to Christ, he confesses that He is bearing the just desert of the sinner, who, but for Christ, must have suffered forever. It is one

object of the atonement, of course, to produce this effect, but by no means its principal object. Its object is related to the universal government of God which is exalted and honored, as Christ himself, and the Apostles, tell us, by the substitution for the sinner of the Infinite Being who satisfied the claims of justice. This, however, shows our guilt and ill-desert to be such that the proud heart rebels, and sometimes tramples under foot the blood of the Son of God.

But it is said, Supposing it to be true, as generally held, that the man Christ Jesus only, suffered, that is, the human part of this mysterious and divine person, how is his atonement of infinite worth and efficacy, more than if an exalted creature of God had suffered?

The union in the person of Christ of the eternal Word, who "was in the beginning," and who "was with God," and who "was God," gave to the sufferings and death of Christ, an infinite value and importance. Some, apparently with a desire to exalt the nature of the atoning sacrifice, would persuade us that the divine nature suffered. This is inconsistent with the immutability of the divine nature itself. We understand the representations of divine repentance, change of purpose, sorrow at the sins of men, pleasure at their obedience, on the part of God, as accommodations to our modes of thought; but pain felt by the very essence of the divine nature itself is generally regarded as violating the divine immutability, and therefore is inadmissible. It is not necessary to constitute an infinite atonement; for the

inhabitation by the Divine Word of One who is suffering the accursed death of the cross, needs no infliction of pain upon the Divine Nature to constitute infinite condescension. This idea would have some plausibility had it been necessary for Christ to endure sufferings equal in amount to those which the redeemed would have experienced. This is in the ablest manner confuted by theologians of the Dutch and Genevan school in opposition to Socinianism. Turretin, illustrating the sufficiency of Christ to make satisfaction for sin by the sufferings of the human nature in his divine Person, distinguishes between pecuniary and penal satisfaction. He reminds us that while a coin in the hands of a subject is as valuable as in the hands of a king, the life of a king is a far greater sacrifice than the life of the subject, and that many soldiers are exchanged or sacrificed for the commander. The sufferings of the finite nature in Christ were of infinite value because of the divine nature in his Person. We cannot tell what kind or degree of suffering is required to satisfy divine justice in an atonement. They make unwarranted assumptions who say that because Christ did not suffer remorse, nor despair, therefore he did not endure that which was equivalent to the penalty of the law. We are not informed that these things, or the sufferings of the Divine nature, are a part of that penalty.

Thus the Bible, without entering into any explanations or recognizing any difficulties with respect to the two natures in the Saviour, represents Him as a Sacri-

fice for sin, speaks of his humiliation, sufferings, death, and his blood, as an atonement for sin, and we, in receiving Him as such, are to do it with all that simplicity of faith with which we would offer up a lamb for a burnt offering.

On reading the second part of Butler's Analogy of Revealed Religion, we perceive that the great principle of the innocent suffering for the guilty, and of what we call vicarious suffering, or suffering endured on account of others, runs through the whole system of divine providence in this world. Parents suffer on account of their children, and children from the sins of their parents; the evil deeds of one member plunge a family circle into distress and lasting shame. Animals are food for animals, and for man. He who objects that atonement for sin by an innocent being is unjust, has a refutation of his theory as often as he comes to his table. There, life has been taken to nourish his life.

Thus, out of the universal principle of vicarious suffering, atonement for sin proceeds, and it is sustained by the whole analogy of the divine government of this world.

Even if it were true that the sufferings of Christ were forced upon him by the Father, it would be difficult to argue against it on the ground of analogy. But the Saviour says, "I lay down my life that I may take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up." "Therefore my Father loveth me, because I lay down my life for the sheep."

This subject is the centre of all evangelical truth. "I delivered unto you," says Paul to the Corinthians, "first of all, that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures." On reading the Bible, passages without number occur which accord with the idea of atonement for sin by the sufferings and death of Jesus Christ; and to interpret them as referring to example, teachings, kind interest in our behalf, and the mere loss of life as a consequence of steadfastly adhering to the truth, or to mere benevolence, makes the Bible false to the rules of good writing, and to the ordinary laws of language.

The deeply seated principle in human nature which makes it look for and crave atonement for sin, and which has showed itself in the offering of sacrifices in every nation at some period of its history, interprets the language of the Bible in accordance with the idea of atonement as a satisfaction to justice.

In reply to the feeling that such a sacrifice for sin implies too much consideration for such a world as this, we have only to think of the capacity for endless joy and sorrow in one immortal soul, and we shall find cause to reflect whether any thing which God can do for man is disproportioned or excessive. Besides, though taking place on this little earth, we know not how far in the universe the influence of the atonement may extend. This earth may be to the universe that which one battle field, or even a bridge successfully defended, has been to empires.

Whoever Christ was, and whatever his death was intended to effect, all that He was and is, and all that He did, was for every individual, as well as for the race, and all this is as necessary for the redemption and salvation of one as of the race. The principles of the divine government would be as really violated in the pardon of one without atonement, as in the pardon of all. "He tasted death for every man." "That was the true light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world." The Sun which ripens the products of one field must be, as it is, ninety-six millions of miles from the earth, the plane of the ecliptic must be at just such a slope, to ripen those fruits, as though it had only that work to do for one husbandman. The Sun is all his, the sweet influences of the heavens are all his, as though he alone were the object of providential care. Thus the Apostle says of Christ: "He loved me and gave himself for me."

But the death of Christ, sufficient for all men, had special reference to his covenanted people. If some were given to Him that He might give them eternal life, He must have had a design in dying for them which He had not in dying for Judas. He had not the same zeal to die for his chosen and for those who, He knew, would reject Him and have their condemnation aggravated by His death. The atonement is sufficient for all, but its design may be learned from its result, which is, the salvation of God's elect.

XII.
ELECTION.

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THIS subject is confessedly a great deep. When we come to consider the secret purposes of the infinite God, modesty and humility are preëminently becoming in those who know so little of themselves. All which we can know of the subject is, of course, the little which God has been pleased to communicate. So that if we venture to speculate upon such premises, we are at once in danger of stepping beyond our province and becoming the counsellors of an Infinite and sovereign will.

Far better is that frame of mind which leads one to place not only his eternal destiny, but his will also in the hands of God to be directed as He shall please, than that feeling of jealousy lest God encroach upon our liberty which makes us try to prescribe the operations of the Most High.

But the Bible is as careful to guard the liberty of man as the sovereignty of God; for, unless man be a free agent, God has no government over minds differing from

his government of the planets. There is an essential difference between the two. To govern free, intelligent minds,—doing all his pleasure, and causing his counsel to stand, while the subject of his government is perfectly accountable, is the crowning glory of the divine administration. Now, there is that in the soul of man with which God never interferes; He never makes one feel that he is crushed, or made to act against his will. In all his dealings with us as accountable creatures, there is an evident purpose on the part of God to make every one feel that he is wholly responsible for his future salvation or perdition. There can be nothing in any scriptural doctrine inconsistent with this, and any teachings of men which are contrary to it, are not true.

No devout mind can entertain the least prejudice against the doctrine of Election when properly understood; but misapprehensions and caricatures of the doctrine fill many with alarm and horror.

The exercise of God's free and sovereign grace in the conversion and salvation of a part of mankind, is the only alternative to the endless sin and misery of the whole. Election, or electing and saving grace is, therefore, the exercise of infinite wisdom and mercy.

Every one who is saved will owe his recovery from sin and his eternity in heaven to Election, that is, to the purpose of God from all eternity to save him.

Now, if Election is the necessary antecedent in the redemption of a multitude which no man can number, if every human being who escapes the second death

will ascribe this salvation to Election, it should not, surely, be viewed with suspicion and hatred. What evil hath it done?

There will be no objection to any good which it may do; but the reply is, It is partial; it saves a part and leaves others, no worse than they, to perish. Not only so, it is alleged that 'it prevents the salvation of a large part of mankind. None can, of course, be saved but the elect. They will be saved, do what they may; and others, do what they may, will perish.'

Never was there a greater misunderstanding of any truth.

It is not true that the elect will be saved, do whatever they may, nor that the rest will perish, do what they may.

This will be made to appear in the proper place. Let it merely be observed here, that Election, instead of being our enemy, with an austere, forbidding look, is our friend. It is the heart and hand of a Redeemer effecting the salvation of every one who will finally be saved, and leaving those who are not saved, in no worse a condition than though none were saved.

The doctrine of Election involves the following truths, namely:

1. All men if left to themselves will continue to sin and therefore will perish.

2. God has resolved that he will rescue a part of mankind from perdition by persuading and enabling them to do their duty.

3. His influence on those who are saved is in perfect consistency with their freedom.

4. No injustice is done to those who are left, salvation is consistently offered to them, and their state is no worse than though all, like them, had perished.

5. God purposed from all eternity to do that which He has actually done and is to do.

If these things can be shown to be true, this doctrine, so far from being obnoxious to prejudice, is a proper cause for thanksgiving and adoration.

Without burdening our memories with the foregoing propositions, let us proceed to inquire whether they are scriptural.

That all men left to themselves would persist in sin and perish, is proved by the inefficacy of means, in themselves, to convert the soul.

For suppose that there were an inherent efficacy in truth, afflictions, mercies, public judgments, warnings, and personal entreaties, to withdraw men from sin and to renew the heart. It would follow that if we could only bring a sufficient amount of such influences to bear upon the sinner, he would necessarily be converted. It would be as it is with powder in blasting, — while a small quantity fails of any effect, a proper amount breaks the rock in pieces. Very few in Christian lands, to say the least, would be left unconverted, certainly very few children of truly Christian parents, or hearers of faithful, evangelical preaching. Imagine a juryman listening to an argument from the bar for

the length of time that he has heard the Gospel preached without yielding himself to its power. The thing is impossible. In every thing but religion appropriate means, suitably used, succeed. While God is, nevertheless, pleased to exercise his grace through the use of means on our part, and while this is the ordinary rule, and we are therefore encouraged to use them, we are made to feel that where they are followed with success, their efficacy is not in themselves but in God alone.

The Bible declares the utter inefficacy of means in themselves to change the heart. "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." "Peter answered and said unto him, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my father which is in heaven." "No man can come unto me except the Father which hath sent me, draw him." — "Which were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."

The appointment of the Holy Ghost, the third person in the Godhead, to regenerate men, and the assignment to Him of this work, to be as peculiarly his as the atonement is the work of Christ, leads us to believe that

man can no more regenerate himself than he can atone for his sins.

God has purposed from eternity, that he will interpose and rescue some from perdition.

“These words spake Jesus and lifted up his eyes to heaven and said — Father — glorify thy Son ; — as thou hast given him power over all flesh that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.” “Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit ;” — “for without me ye can do nothing.” “And when the Gentiles heard this they were glad and glorified the name of the Lord ; and as many as were ordained to eternal life, believed.” “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God ; to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son.” “Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.”

It is said by some that this foreknowledge and choice on the part of God had reference merely to national arrangements, — to the bestowal of the Gospel on one people and not on another. But if God has commanded that the Gospel be “made known to all nations for the obedience of faith,” those who adopt the foregoing interpretation cannot, on their premises, show that one nation is “elected according to the foreknowledge of

God the Father," more than another. Besides, if it were so, this would only be a removal further back of the difficulty in election. For why is it less partial for God to elect one nation to receive the Gospel, than one individual? Such "election" of a nation will result in the salvation of a great multitude, while the nation not "elected" will not be saved. In which case there is as much ground for suspicion of partiality as there could be in the case of individual 'election.'

There can be no objection to individual 'election,' unless it interferes with the freedom of the individual, or does injustice to others.

That it does not necessarily interfere with the freedom of the individual, may be shown by such analogies as these. God has decreed, we will say, that there shall be a crop of wheat in yonder field. No one would venture to say, 'If God has decreed that the wheat shall grow there, it will certainly grow, let the husbandmen do as they please.' No, for if the grain is decreed, so is the planting, and the necessary tillage. Such, to be consistent, ought also to say, 'If the passengers and crew in Paul's ship were destined to be saved, they would have been saved, do whatever they pleased.' But this was not so; for though Paul had told the shipmaster and all on board, that he had had a divine revelation, and 'there shall not a hair of your head perish,' yet when he saw the men letting down the boat to escape, he said, 'Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved.'

If we are elected, it is also 'elected' or decreed that we shall be perfectly voluntary in our repentance and faith; that we shall act as of our own accord.

Here, some make a great mistake who strive to explain the consistency between these two things, attempting to show how it is that man works out his salvation while God works in him both to will and to do. No metaphysical explanations can make this plain. It is far the best way to prove both of these things, and then leave the explanation of their consistency as something beyond our reach. We may prove that they coëxist, that God has foreordained whatsoever comes to pass, and that man knows himself to be perfectly responsible for his actions. We never doubt this in the ordinary affairs of life; for example, we make no question that a political cabinet is perfectly free as to any consciousness of supernatural control, in making war or peace, at the same time that the God of nations is ruling in those affairs, that his counsel will stand, and that He will do all his pleasure.

It is no misfortune surely, in any respect, that God foreknows every thing, though the objections of some to his election of those who are to be saved, and his having any thing to do with the question who are to be saved, would lead us to feel that it would be more just if God would be ignorant of some things. We prefer to have One on the throne who cannot be disappointed nor surprised by any sudden turn of affairs, who cannot be countermined by the ingenuity of his enemies, and whose plans, instead of being shaped by what his creatures

will do, shape their plans for them, in perfect consistency with their utmost freedom.

But the great difficulty on this subject lies in the consistency of promises and threatenings, and the full and free offers of salvation to all men, with the secret purposes of God to overcome the opposition of only a certain number. It is asked how we can reconcile those secret purposes with the unconditional and unrestricted calls upon men everywhere to repent. Rather than believe in this alleged inconsistency on the part of God, many prefer to believe that there are no acts of election, that nothing is fixed beforehand with regard to the question whether one or another shall be made willing to repent; but that every individual receives the offer of pardon, and God, foreseeing how he will treat it, decides accordingly with regard to his future condition. All this proceeds, no doubt, from a sincere desire to preserve the liberty of the individual, and to secure for a preacher the greatest freedom in offering salvation to men,—which it is said no one can offer if he believes that it is already determined who shall be saved.

To this it may be replied that since no one will be saved who does not repent and believe, and since no one in repenting and believing is conscious of any interference with his perfect freedom of choice and act, and since neither preacher nor hearer knows who, if any, in the congregation are chosen to salvation, the preacher has nothing to do but make proclamation of the Gospel, and treat his hearers as God treats them, as responsible

and free. If they are converted it will be in the exercise of their constitutional powers of thinking and reasoning and feeling; those powers are stimulated through the action of one human mind upon another, presenting motives; this, as the channel of his influence, God has ordained, as truly as he has ordained pistils and stamens and pollen in flowers as the means of fulfilling his purposes in the fructification and propagation of plants.

But it pains many to think that God offers salvation to those from whom he has purposed to withhold that grace which alone can make them accept it.

Before replying to this, let us ask ourselves, Are we not all at liberty to accept or to reject the offers of God, as we choose? Wherein consists the inability of any hearer of the Gospel to go from the house of God to his chamber and there yield himself up to God? Is there any more power implied in doing this, or inability in not doing it, than if one of the two parties were an earthly parent, or master, instead of God? If it be true that no one will do this unless God constrains him, is it not owing wholly to the force of his disinclination? And if so, who is responsible for it save the sinner himself? The greater such inability, the greater the guilt.

We are always instructed and greatly satisfied with regard to this subject on listening to the prayer, after sermon, of one who has been repudiating the idea of election while calling upon his hearers at once to repent of their sins and accept Christ. "Lord," he says, "we

have done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room. All has been said which we can say to convince and to persuade; but such is the blindness and hardness of our hearts that unless Thou interpose, all will be in vain. Now, Lord, stretch forth thy hand to save; open their eyes, change their hearts, make them willing in the day of thy power." So prays the fervent, zealous opposer of Election, and no believer in the doctrine does any more. Prayer after sermon is out of place, when the object of its petitions is a blessing upon the Word, unless we feel that Paul may plant and Apollos water, but God giveth the increase; but if this be so, there is nothing in the doctrine of Election inconsistent with prayer. The doctrine of Election is a greatly injured friend. It represents God as doing just that which every lover of souls beseeches God to do when all reasoning and persuasion appear to be utterly in vain.

But we will meet the difficulty in the most explicit manner. As to any injustice toward those who are not made willing to repent, let us suppose the following case: A teacher is remonstrating with some pupils, in circumstances where remonstrance seems the only suitable means of influencing them. Everything is said which a reasonable being would think necessary to effect the purpose, or to make resistance inexcusable. All is in vain. There is a unanimous rejection of the teacher's endeavors. In a private way he calls one and another to him, one by one, and plies him with further considerations, appeals to things in his private history and cir-

cumstances, and he gains the submission of a number. This is followed by some great advantage, which makes these few the objects of envy. Now let us imagine the obstinate and persevering part of the company drawing near to upbraid the teacher, saying, 'Had you employed further influences with us, we too might have yielded. You were partial. On you be the blame of our loss.' — They would be justly scorned for their impertinence. The teacher did all for them which as reasonable beings they could properly ask or expect. He sincerely desired the submission of all. It might have been as easy for him to have subdued them all, one by one, as to have secured the assent of the few. He exercised "sovereignty," "election," in what he did. He did not hate any, he did not prefer their continued rebellion, though he chose not to interpose with them all, but to leave some under the influences of truth, reason, and their consciences. True, he saw that no one would turn without some special act on his part; but this did not make them less criminal; it rather illustrated their guilt; nor did it abate their accountableness, nor his righteousness. If it be said that the foreknowledge of God makes the case wholly different between Him and sinners, we reply, Would we have God ignorant as to the results of his conduct, in order to save his consistency in his offers? The difficulty is as great in supposing God not to know who will accept or reject his proposals, as in the present case, which but in part illustrates our subject.

One of the most injurious and dishonorable views of

the divine government is that which seems to represent God as doing the best He can against sin, as against an unexpected adversary. It seems, according to some representations of the divine character and conduct, as though God would look upon the redeemed at last and congratulate himself that He had succeeded so well, better perhaps than He feared, though still there are multitudes who have disappointed Him and have not been won. This theory makes the Most High an object of pity. He has been invaded by an adversary, who has disputed his throne; He gains a partial success, but the killed, the wounded, and the missing are fearfully numerous, to his great disappointment and loss. This cannot be. We cannot fully revere one whom we pity. We prefer to place every man, angel and devil, with every holy and sinful act, and the eternal happiness or misery of every one of us, in the hands of an infinitely wise and powerful God, and pray that He would order every thing with a view to the highest interests of his universal kingdom, knowing as we do that "He is excellent in power, and in judgment, and in plenty of justice." We would make God supreme, and not the creature; and if there be conflicting theories with regard to the divine government, we incline to that which exalts God. We must make our thoughts and feelings on this subject chord with the tone-note of such passages as these: "My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure." "But our God is in the heavens; He hath done whatsoever He pleased."

“And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing; and He doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth, and none can stay his hand, or say unto Him, What doest thou?” “Whatsoever the Lord pleased, that did He in heaven, and in earth, in the seas, and all deep places.”

The idea that God elected some because He foresaw that they would repent, is not sustained when we consider that God could not foresee any thing which was not certain, and that nothing but God's decree makes it certain. For there can be only two causes of certainty;—the thing itself, or God's purpose. A future thing cannot be the cause of its own existence, for that implies existence before the thing exists. If a thing can be the cause of its becoming future, then it might exist of itself, and there is no Great First Cause of all things. God cannot foreknow that a thing will exist, until it is certain that it will exist. Hence, speaking after the manner of men, the decree of God must be prior to his foreknowledge. He foreknew all things which would come to pass, by foreknowing his purposes.

How did God foreknow that one soul would be saved as a consequence of the Saviour's death? that the whole plan would not be a failure? If it were dependent on human choice, it might follow that Christ would not see of the travail of his soul in one convert. Can we suppose that the Almighty Ruler would thus leave his great plans contingent upon the

choice and conduct of his creatures? We perceive that this was not so, if we consider the express declaration of the Apostle Peter, in which, with fearless disregard of cavil and utter forgetfulness of all seeming contradiction, he represents the Jews as fulfilling the purposes of God in the crucifixion of Christ: "Him being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and with wicked hands have crucified and slain." "For of a truth," said the assembled Church, on a memorable occasion, "against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, for to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done." This scriptural way of treating divine decrees and free agency is surely safe — namely, to believe them both, and to leave out of view all question as to their consistency. The wicked are charged with guilt in fulfilling God's purposes in their voluntary transgression, while all merit is taken away from faith by saying of it, — "and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God." "The Lord hath made all things for himself, yea even the wicked for the day of evil." Not one more, not one less, will be saved than God purposed. At the same time, in every case, "the work of a man's hands shall he render unto him, and cause every man to find his own way."

It is important to bear in mind that the decrees of God are not the rule of our duty. It must of necessity

be that God shall have his plans and purposes. It is no misfortune to Himself nor to us, that He is all-wise and almighty. But while God is sovereign, and while nothing can arise to disappoint Him, it is equally true that every man has his choice, and will 'eat the fruit of his own ways and be filled with his own devices.' It is no more decreed whether each of us shall be saved or lost, than it is whether or not we shall spend the coming night in the places where we now are;—we shall no more fulfil a purpose of God by spending eternity in heaven or hell, than by being found here or elsewhere at midnight. We are as free to choose and to act in one case as in the other.

We conclude that the two things are true—God's electing purposes, and man's perfect free agency. One is as true as the other. In a moral government, one is as important as the other. The two things exist together, not only in religion, but in planting, and studying, and in commerce. But the consistency of the two things is called in question only in religion. God may justly condemn every objector out of his own mouth; for why do we cavil at divine agency in connection with the voluntary conduct of men in religion, when we believe in it and fully admit it in every thing else pertaining to human conduct?

It is asked, 'Why does not God save all men by choosing them? He does this for some, He could easily do it for all. It would be so beneficent, and it is so easy, as we see in the case of those who are chosen

and called, that the wonder is why all are not made willing?’

Two answers are given to this question, and they mark respectively two opposite systems.

One theologian says, ‘God *cannot* convert all men, any more than he can make two and two five, or create mountains without a valley between them. We do not, in saying this, limit his power; He has himself chosen to be governed by laws, and there are laws which absolutely prevent Him from converting all men. Some sin and resist in such ways and to such degrees that God cannot consistently overcome their opposition. He judged best from all eternity to leave some to themselves who should oppose his efforts for their good with certain kinds or degrees of resistance.’

To this many objections may be made.

One is, It makes conversion, or the bestowment of special grace, somewhat merited on the part of those who are converted. It represents God as trying all men up to a certain point with the question whether they would submit to Him, and then deciding their future condition by the degrees of their opposition or the readiness of their submission. “But,” says the apostle to the Thessalonians, “we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren, beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.” Again, another says, “Elect, according to the foreknowledge of God the father, through sancti-

fication of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus.”

Then, again, it makes the choice of God depend wholly on one thing, leaving out of view the wide range of considerations on the part of God which would make the salvation of one soul more illustrative than another of important principles, and more influential in his government of others.

But the following answer to the question, Why God does not secure the salvation of all men by overcoming their opposition to Him, is to be preferred, namely, God, for infinitely wise reasons, does not choose to do so. He prefers, in certain cases, not to interfere with the sinner's chosen course of rebellion. Enough is done to convince and persuade him, in the ordinary means of religious instruction, if he will yield his criminal aversion to God. But God does not, in certain cases, see fit to interpose.

If this be not so, why did not God interpose and prevail over Pharaoh, and Saul, and Rehoboam? why did he not prevent the revolt of the Ten Tribes? This leads to questions about the existence of moral evil, where we soon lose ourselves, and our wisdom is turned to folly. But it is no part of wisdom to assign a reason which dishonors God, for the sake of accounting for any thing which may after all be inscrutable. “Even so Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight,” said the Saviour in view of God's sovereign choice. We do not assign reasons for this choice; we only say that

there are reasons for it in God's unrevealed purposes and plan, and that the sinner does not himself limit or control the power and grace of God by his obedience or disobedience, in any such way as to interfere with the perfect sovereignty of God.

We may safely ask any unconverted man if he has not, thus far, had his own secret choice; whether he has felt himself to be debarred from opportunities to be at peace with God, and whether, in short, he has not obtained as much in religion as he has ever desired or endeavored to possess.

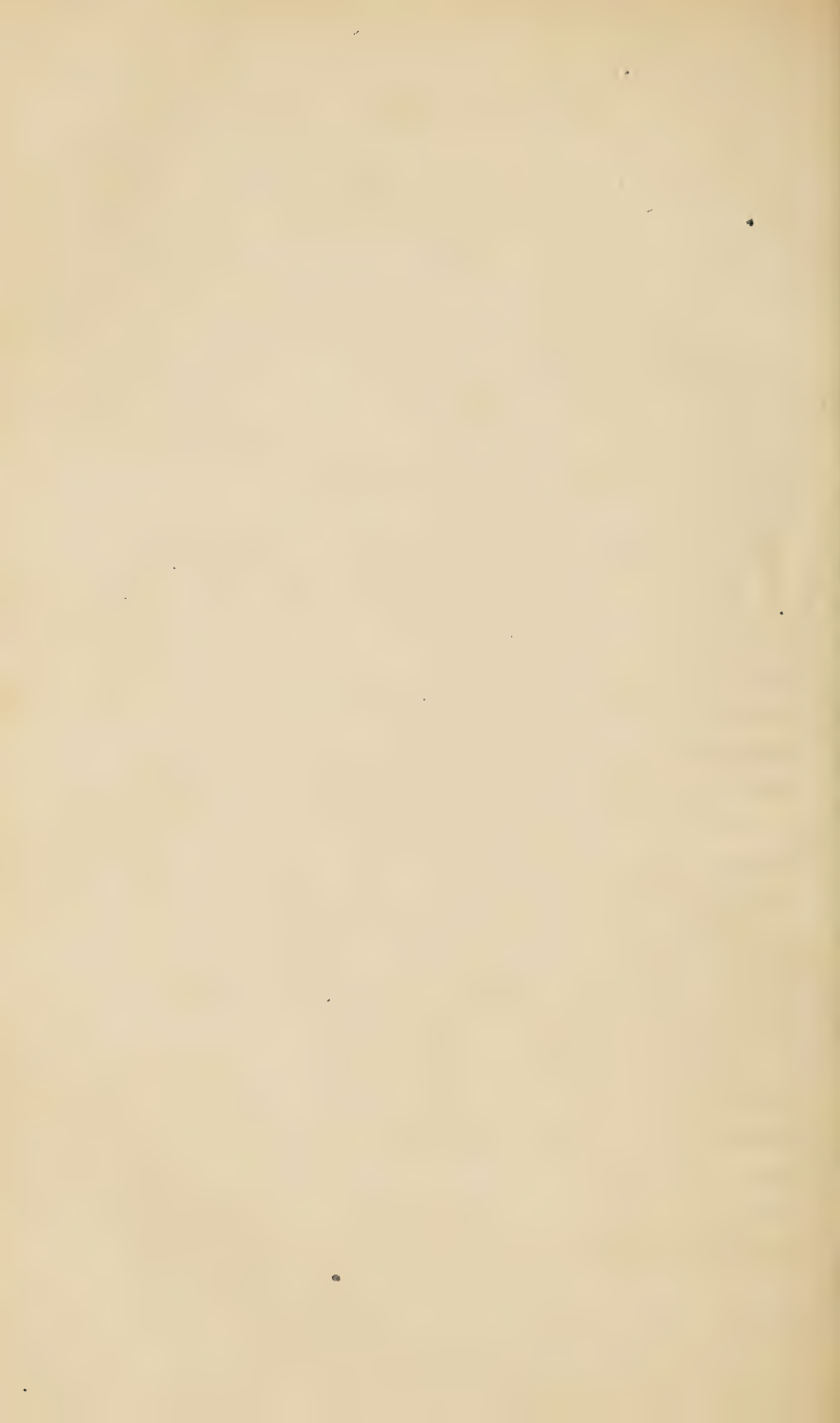
It is not so with regenerate men. Their language is, "My soul followeth hard after thee." The panting heart, the thirsty land, are emblems of believing souls. We shall obtain our wishes in this respect; every man will "find his own way;" but no doubt the unreasonable complaint at last of many will be, that God suffered them to have their own choice. But as rational creatures they were perfectly capable of choosing for themselves, and "reprobation" will consist simply in abandoning some to their chosen way, our decisions, all unconsciously to ourselves, coming out at last in perfect accordance with the eternal purposes of God.

To change the strain of such remarks, — We can readily perceive what perfect joy it must be to feel that, if we are believers, God has, from the beginning, chosen us to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth. A foundation is thus laid for our safety which is sure. "I have loved thee

with an everlasting love ; therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee." "Being confident of this very thing that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." "Election" is the everlasting guarantee of safety to all who accept Christ, because their acceptance was not of themselves, 'it is the gift of God.' It hinders no one from being saved. To every one who declines to use the appointed means of salvation, with reliance on divine aid promised to all who seek it, the language of the doctrine is, "Friend, I do thee no wrong." On the other hand, it is "strong consolation" to those who have "fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before them."

XIII.

REGENERATION.



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IT is an interesting inquiry, whether the confession of faith which Nicodemus made to Christ was sufficient to constitute him a Christian. It implies all which is held by many to be essential to the Christian character and to salvation. We take it for granted that it was accompanied by a moral, upright life. Nothing more is essential, in the view of many, in order to be a Christian but to receive Christ, with the heart, as a divinely commissioned teacher. Receiving Him thus, believing his words, and, according to our ability, as it is said, practising his precepts, if a man is not, in the Saviour's view, a Christian, what can be wanting to complete his acceptance with God?

We naturally conceive of Nicodemus as a venerable, intelligent, upright man, rather over-cautious, perhaps, at least very prudent, a candid, liberal, and, for every reason, an estimable man.

If a Persian of high repute came to many of our friends and fellow-citizens, saying, I am at last persuaded

that Jesus Christ is a divinely commissioned teacher, and I shall endeavor to be governed by his instructions in my intercourse with men, are there not many who would welcome him to full communion as a Christian?

Should he, however, come to others and make this profession, they would say to him, We are glad to hear this;—and now tell us whether you perceive any radical change in your feelings toward God, comparing your present state with your views and feelings before you came to this belief in Christ as a teacher come from God. How do you view yourself in comparison with the law of God, and what have you done to obtain pardon? Are we saved by our own righteousness? Or, do you depend on the righteousness of Christ?

Some would say, This is carrying the matter too far. If a man be a moral, upright man, and a conscientious believer in the religion of Jesus, why should we pry into his secret experience, or perplex him with questions as to his interior life?—Then, perhaps, those familiar words would be quoted: “He can’t be wrong whose life is in the right.”

But what constitutes a man’s “life?” “Out of the heart are the issues of life;” the secret feelings and purposes form a guide to our whole conduct. Our secret feelings toward God, are, by the lawgiver, placed first in enumerating the duties of man: ‘Thou shalt love the Lord thy God,—and thy neighbor as thyself.’ One who should be destitute of filial love would not be justified by proving that, as a brother, he was exemplary.

Therefore, we should not be satisfied with Nicodemus if he came and made this profession of faith in the Messiah. We would, however, most affectionately take him by the hand and lead him on to the knowledge of higher and more essential truth.

Such was the way in which the Saviour treated him.

There was every thing in his approach to Christ fitted to conciliate respect and love. It was a great thing for a man in his circumstances to come before Christ with such a profession. He was a Ruler of the Jews. We gather from the sacred record that he had weight of character. He performed one of the most critical and difficult things when, on one occasion, he stilled a popular excitement by asking a question of the Pharisees fraught with common sense: "Doth our law condemn a man before it hear him, and know what he doeth?" They gave him, it is true, a surly answer; but we read that 'every man went to his own house.'

All these things being considered, the reception of Nicodemus by Christ was remarkable.

He reinforced his explicit confession of Christ with an argument, — "for no man can do the miracles which thou doest except God be with him."

The use of the word "we," when he said, "we know that thou art a teacher come from God," seemed to imply a turning tide in favor of Christ among his circle.

Now it must be confessed that the reply of Christ is surprising, — it is far different from that which many would have expected.

The Saviour does not seem to recognize his confession. He does not take up his line of remark ; He does not confirm his young faith by further arguments or convincing signs. This, however, He did in the case of Nathanael, for He proceeds to reward and to strengthen that man's faith in Him by giving him a proof of his omniscience : " Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig-tree, I saw thee," and Nathanael's answer shows that this was something more than the knowledge of a passer-by ; it made him feel that things in his experience were known by the Saviour which could have been known only to himself and to God.

But the reply of Christ to Nicodemus, on the contrary, was abrupt, startling ; it was an intimation to him that he needed not only something more, but something of a different kind. " Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

But it may be said, True, this was abrupt and startling, yet was it not merely a chosen method of arresting the attention and impressing the mind of the inquirer ? Was it not as though Christ had said, ' You are entirely right ; and unless a man thinks and believes as you do, he cannot be a believer in Christ ' ? This desperate attempt at interpretation has had its defenders.

That such was not the meaning of the Saviour's words, we infer from their evident effect upon Nicodemus, and from the further reply of Christ. His mind was led away by the Saviour's words to another train

of thought, and Christ did not bring him back to his first position. Nicodemus answers, "How can a man be born when he is old?" Christ replies, "Art thou a master in Israel and knowest not these things?"

One may well ask here, with the two who walked to Emmaus, "What things?" Let us frame several answers, and see if they are warranted by the conversation; so we may learn what Christ meant by being "born again."

'Knowest thou not' that unless a man ceases to be a Jew he cannot become a Christian?—That surely is not the meaning of Christ. Being 'born again' cannot mean merely a change from Judaism to Christianity, for Nicodemus would have had no difficulty in understanding how a man could in that way be born when he is old. And would those who suggest this interpretation admit that Christ meant to teach, No one can go to heaven unless he ceases to be a Jew?

Nor could He have meant that unless a vicious man became thoroughly moral he could not be saved. This is too obvious to be solemnly asserted, and besides, Nicodemus would have expressed no surprise at such a truth.

Still, this is the explanation of those who see nothing supernatural in the meaning of Christ. They hold Him as saying, An entire change of views, feelings, habits, and practices is necessary for an irreligious man to become a Christian. There is no allusion, they think,

to a supernatural change. And such a change as they advocate, of course, is not supernatural.

But we think that the further conversation of Christ contains a perfect demonstration that in speaking of being "born again," He referred to a supernatural change. And this is the evidence: He declares this change, whatever it is, to be a mystery, and He compares it to the inscrutable mysteriousness of the wind. "The wind bloweth where it listeth; and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, nor whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit."

Now we have only to apply this declaration of mysteriousness to the things said by many to be intended by the expression "born again," to see that they do not answer to this description. For example: We cannot say, Every one who changes his faith, or, Every one who ceases to be immoral and becomes virtuous, is like the mysterious wind. A man, ceasing to be a Turk and becoming a Christian, or a Jew giving in his adhesion to Christ, cannot be likened, in the processes of his mind under that change, to one of the most inscrutable things in nature. There is indeed no mystery in such changes, any further than that every thing relating to mind is mysterious. There is as much that is mysterious in the act of walking as in a change of views and feelings, or of habits and behavior. All agree in this, that the Great Teacher would not have needlessly poured confusion and mystery on the path of an inquirer;

yet we see that He did at once direct his attention to something which Nicodemus did not understand.

We will now assume that Christ, in these words, intended to teach a change in the nature of man, such as lies beyond the experience of the human mind in the exercise of its own powers and faculties even under the ordinary assistance of divine providence.

We will, therefore, paraphrase the words of Christ in this manner: When Nicodemus said, "Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God" — Christ says, All this is right and good; but something more is necessary than to believe in my divine mission, or to receive my precepts. You must be born again. Not you, merely, but, "except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Nicodemus replies, This, in the nature of things, is impossible. The Saviour repeats it, but varies and intensifies his expressions: Except a man experience such a spiritual renovation of his nature as would be indicated by saying that he is 'born of water,' that is, that a cleansing process should enter into his very nature, unless a man be thus renewed by the Holy Spirit that he shall be as really a partaker of a renewed nature as he was partaker of his fleshly nature through his parents, he can neither be a member of my kingdom on earth, nor in heaven.

Christ proceeds to show the necessity of this change. He seems to add, It lies in this, that there is a total difference between man by nature and man by grace.

“That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I say unto you, Ye must be born again;” — a word too solemn and impressive to mean any thing which lies within the consciousness of every human being, and pointing to something supernatural.

We will suppose Nicodemus to inquire of Christ what He means by “flesh.” We can be at no loss for the reply. The word is often synonymous with sinfulness, and denotes a corrupt, natural disposition. “So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.” “When we were in the flesh,” says Paul, “the motions of sins—did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death.” The meaning of Christ, then, must be this: Every one who is born into this world has a corrupt nature. Its characteristic is sinfulness. And every one who experiences the transformation now spoken of is as truly born of the Spirit of God as by nature he is born of his parents, and his nature is characterized by holiness as its governing principle. It is important, however, to bear in mind, that as there are some things in the corrupt nature which are lovely and pleasant, so in the spiritual nature there are deficiencies, and indications of a remaining corruption. The nature in the one case, however, is characterized by sin with not the smallest degree of holiness; and the other by the love and practice of holiness and by desires after God, mingled with imperfections and sins. — But, to resume the argument. Do

not marvel at this, the Saviour adds, that I assert the necessity for such a radical transformation of man's nature; for if you reflect you must perceive that, to be qualified for a spiritual, holy heaven, man must have an utter change of nature.

How can these things be? exclaims the Ruler. He had never thought of religion as consisting in any thing but uprightness, morality, and the right performance of religious observances.

“Art thou a master in Israel,” says Christ, “and knowest not these things?” You do not seem to receive my witness; yet I speak that which I know, and testify that which I have seen. However mysterious, this which I have now inculcated is really one of the simple things of religion; it is among the “earthly,” that is, the rudimental, elementary, truths. If you stumble here, what will you do as you proceed; for if I have told you elementary things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe if I tell you heavenly things, — things which lie beyond human apprehension. It is in my power to tell you of these things, also, as no one else can do; “for no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven.” Let me indicate to you one of these heavenly things. I came not merely as “a teacher sent from God;” I come as a sacrifice for sin. Well do you know how faith in a brazen serpent healed the Israelites in the desert. “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must

the Son of man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. He that believeth on him is not condemned, but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.”

The effect of this conversation on Nicodemus is seen not only in his opposition to an unjust procedure, in the presence of the Pharisees, as before mentioned, but at the cross of Christ and at the Saviour's burial, he witnessed a good confession when the world was against him and his Lord. “And there came also Nicodemus which at the first came to Jesus by night, and brought also a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pound weight.” True, he did not, like Joseph, come ‘boldly’ to Pilate; and some have expressed the fear that he is included among those of whom it is said, “Nevertheless among the chief rulers, also, many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees, they did not confess him lest they should be put out of the synagogue. For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.” If “born again,” perhaps he was an illustration of the consistency between being regenerated and low degrees of sanctification. Let us hope otherwise.

The doctrine of Christ in this conversation, therefore, is, that every man must experience a supernatural change in order to enter heaven.

If this be so, we must expect to see men experiencing that change; there is a transformation of nature which takes place answering to the description given of it by the Saviour. Is there any such phenomenon?

There is a remarkable phenomenon in human experience occurring everywhere under the preaching of the Gospel. It is called regeneration, change of heart, the new birth. It takes place everywhere, under the preaching of the Gospel, without respect to the previous conditions of men, whether learned or ignorant, civilized or savage. Missionaries preach Christ crucified to a rude and barbarous people, and soon we read the experiences of the native converts expressed in terms answering to the experience of the most cultivated in any lands. Sometimes many of these transformations take place at once; often, without the knowledge of what is passing in the minds of each other, members of the same family or congregation will manifest this change. The most learned and discriminating of men have substantially the same experience with the converted barbarian. Baxter, and Doddridge, and Chalmers, writing an account of their experience respectively, would agree, in all that is essential, with the artless narratives given by candidates for admission to the churches formed in heathen countries. This change is so remarkable where the Gospel is preached, that it cannot be accounted for from local peculiarities. Nor can it be ascribed to personal influence, to priestcraft, to sectarian zeal. Let any man be overtaken, for example, by affliction, sending

him to his Bible for instruction and consolation, and he, without the aid of a teacher, will be likely to experience this change in as marked a way as any convert under the ministry or personal influence of a fellow man.

There is no other phenomenon in human experience which answers to the words of Christ when He declares that a certain change is necessary in order that any man may see God.

The characteristics of this change are, The individual is convinced of his utter ruin and condemnation as a sinner; he accepts the atoning sacrifice of Christ as the ground of his justification; this, which is wrought in him by the power of the Holy Spirit, in the use of his own faculties, is accompanied by a permanent change in his views and feelings toward God, indicated by that which the Saviour himself designated as the distinguishing mark of conversion in Saul of Tarsus, —“Behold he prayeth.” Prayer becomes a natural and spontaneous expression of his feelings toward God, a relationship of father and child being now established between them. A new principle has taken possession of his nature, disallowing sin, causing pain when it is committed, or afterward, in addition to the mere twinges or reproaches of conscience. The old nature is not annihilated; no new powers and faculties are implanted, but the taste, the bias, of the soul, are on the side of holiness, and they gain the ascendancy by greater or less degrees. Sometimes it is the case that the appetite

for vicious indulgence is at once and wholly destroyed, when regeneration takes place. A remarkable and well attested illustration of this may be found in Doddridge's Life of Col. Gardner. There are many well known cases of the same kind in modern times, and among inebriates. It is an error to speak of 'eradicating a propensity;' this cannot take place in this world except by unnatural violence done to the human system. The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus sets us free from the body of sin and death, in proportion as that law gets ascendancy. "Our lusts its wondrous power controls." But in most cases the warfare continues through life; yet instead of being a proof of unregeneracy, as some, dismayed by temptation, conclude, it is a proof that a work of grace has begun, and is making progress in the soul.

This change is denoted by Christ as being "born of water and of the Spirit." *To be born of any thing*, is to partake of, and to represent, the nature of that thing. 'Born of light,' is a phrase to denote truth, transparency of character; 'born of contention,' indicates disquiet and disagreement; 'born of water' expresses the idea of being radically cleansed, and to be 'born of the Spirit,' is to receive a radical change by the influence of the Holy Spirit. To 'be born of water and of the Spirit,' therefore, is to have a *radical change*, the character, and the source, of it being indicated by the terms *water*, and *the Spirit*.

This change is permanent;—as permanent as the

natural creation of the soul itself; this moral renovation can no more become annihilated than the soul itself. The proofs of this will be presented under another subject.

But it may be observed here, that few things are of greater practical importance. The question whether a real change of heart is necessarily and always permanent, has a very great influence on Christian character and happiness.

While no new powers and faculties are implanted in the soul, this change makes a man capable of things of which he was morally incapable before. Distaste of sin, love of holiness, both from a perception of their respective natures, and not merely with a view to their consequences, delight in God, the love of holy pleasures and pursuits, new governing motives and ends in life, are the fruits of this change.

But there is constant resistance in the soul to this new principle. Life now is a conflict. Two streams tending opposite ways now frequently meet; before, the current of the soul ran one way. Hence, the stronger the resistance between the new nature and the old, the more manifest is the proof that regeneration is asserting itself, though the subject of the conflict is ready to conclude that he can never have been renewed. With the mind he serves the law of God; with the flesh, the law of sin; but the result, on the whole, is victory, though every hour, if judged according to his works, he would utterly fail of justification, and he needs continually the righteousness which God has provided in Jesus Christ.

Regeneration is the work of God. Man is active in the change, he is not conscious of any supernatural power, he cannot distinguish the operations of the Spirit from his own thoughts and feelings. But every one who is regenerated, is 'born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.' It is not mere help given to deficient, but almost competent, strength, in the sinner while trying to do his duty; from first to last it is the sovereign work of God; He takes the first step; every thing in the soul is naturally averse to God, and it is overcome and changed by divine power, all, however, in perfect but mysterious consistency with the freedom and entire responsibility of the soul itself. True, there is in man a love of happiness, and this is made use of, appeals are made to it, but of itself it never leads man to God, notwithstanding the sure conviction that sin will be followed by endless misery. There is no passion in the human soul which man will not, at some time, indulge at the risk of life; in like manner, eternal life is placed at jeopardy in the pursuit of sin. There is no claim which a fellow man would need to urge so long and so strenuously, by a ten thousandth part, as ministers urge the claims of God upon the human soul, where they have labored in vain. No man ever repents of his sins and turns to God but by divine power. He who is capable of loving and of discriminating between good and evil, and has a perfect appreciation of duty and justice, and of claims upon his gratitude, is nevertheless totally averse to the just claims

of God upon him ; and this is not owing, therefore, to any inability which makes him excusable, but to a want of inclination ; so that instead of his inability being an excuse, the guilt is in proportion to the inability ; hence, he who is most unable, is under the greater condemnation, if, indeed, there could be degrees in an inability which is everywhere total, or in the lost condition of one who is ‘condemned already.’

While all this is true, Regeneration, as the gift of God, is obtainable by every one.

Here we will confine ourselves to the simple representations of the Bible, and to the analogy of human experience in common things.

We everywhere find in the Bible appeals made to men, in the form of commands, invitations, entreaties, expostulations ; their hopes and fears are addressed ; their love of happiness, their dread of pain, their sense of duty, their shame, are appealed to with a view to convince them of sin and persuade them to repent.

The consistency of this with the alleged utter inability of man to act without divine power first moving him to do his duty, has always been the subject of discussion, and it probably always will be while human nature remains the same. One obvious consideration is of service in this connection. The power of God may be equally great and sovereign in influencing the human mind and in starting one of the orbs of heaven in its career ; but this power is evidently far more different in the two cases than the power which makes a planet

move is from that which makes the corn to grow or a bird to fly. In both these cases, established laws exist, regulating growth or action, and God, who appointed those laws, observes them. But in causing a soul to act agreeably to his will, He brings a nature into existence, with its established laws; He falls in with them; and instead of compelling obedience, involuntarily, He treats men as free agents, influences them through considerations, and makes them willing. Because He does this, some say He cannot and does not exercise any sovereign control over the mind. But they who say this do not consider that to influence and govern a will is not in the nature of things the same as to govern a cloud or storm. If the will of a free agent is governed, it will be governed in the use of motives. It is true that in using these motives in regeneration a power is exerted to make them effectual, yet this power is truly consentaneous with the act of willing. Does any one maintain that God cannot make us willing without interfering with our perfect freedom? If he asserts this, he assumes to know that to which Christ referred when, using the figure of the wind, He said, — “thou canst not tell whence it cometh nor whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit.”

With divine simplicity, fearless of the metaphysicians, Paul says, “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.” God works in us “to will;” He makes us “will;” He makes us

willing; He works in us to will, and we, at the same time, work out our salvation. There are some who profess that they can explain this; it is generally most clear to some who are fresh from their academical studies; as they advance in knowledge, however, some of them happily conclude that it is best to show the sovereignty of God in conversion, and the conscious freedom of man, and to leave the manner of their coöperation where the Saviour cautioned Nicodemus to leave the infinite mystery. Until we know the nature of the Spirit's operation in the soul, we cannot assert that it is inconsistent with the perfect responsibility of man.

The simple duty of man is to repent and believe on Christ. Doing this (by the operation of the Holy Spirit, for it is the gift of God), a mysterious divine work is done in the soul by the Holy Spirit, which constitutes Regeneration. Repentance is not regeneration; faith is not regeneration; they "accompany and flow from" regeneration. There is a work of the Spirit in the nature of the soul, and not merely among its volitions; something is done which causes those volitions to be otherwise than they are by nature. What it is, no one can tell us; good and able men try their skill in efforts to explain it; "the balance of the sensitivities is changed," says one; "the bias of the will is deflected," says another; "the substratum of the soul is renovated and fertilized," says a third; and a fourth thinks that nothing is done which is constitutional,

but God is the author of every holy volition, by a direct act. But, "as thou knowest not how the bones do grow" — or what life is, we may well be silent, and lay our hands upon our mouths.

We must establish in the mind of every man the belief of his perfect accountableness for his character and conduct. This we can do without being able to explain to him the mysterious connection between his freedom and divine influence. We can satisfy a reflecting mind by showing that we all believe ourselves to act freely in the most vital affairs, while we know that God rules in them; that we are never hindered by the thought of his decrees from planting, that we never impute our failures to Him when we have been either neglectful or unwise. If one says, I cannot repent nor believe in Christ without divine aid, therefore I must wait till the power of God shall come upon me; we can satisfy him that he remains inactive for such a reason only in religion, while his objection would be equally true in other things which never awaken the least suspicion of his not being wholly free.

As the Holy Spirit influencing the soul in regeneration acts wholly in accordance with the nature and laws of the mind and will, so it is true that there are means to be used by ourselves in regeneration, preparations for it, and hinderances, in all of which human liberty is never invaded, and the result makes every one see and feel that he receives according to his work. To see the conscious liberty of men in all that relates

to this change, we have only to consider, What is there to hinder any one from retiring to read the Word of God, with meditation? What is there in the way of his asking God to teach him and lead him while he inquires as to his duty? If he is tempted to stroll, or to be slothful, or to work, on the Sabbath, what prevents him but his own inclination from resisting such temptations and from taking his place in the house of God? And on going home, is there any miraculous agency, of which he must be conscious, necessary to make him kneel in prayer and acknowledge before God the truth and obligation of such things as have been impressed upon his conscience and heart?

He who should do these things, seeking that repentance and faith which the Bible requires, would be more sure of experiencing the regenerating grace of God than he can be of success in any mercantile or agricultural pursuit by the use of the most promising means. Risk and misfortune wait on every thing else, but "him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." "Ask and it shall be given you, seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you." Let any one reflect whether there is any thing in these common acts above alluded to in striving to exercise repentance and faith, which calls for any greater measure of conscious aid from on high than his daily enterprises? Surely not; yet at the same time every such act is as truly the work of the Holy Spirit as though we saw or felt his agency, or were conscious of being utterly passive in these

experiences and actions. We think on our ways; we turn to God; we feel unhappy and in need of a more than human love; we feel ourselves to be sinful and lost, and we draw near to Him who alone can help us. We should repel one who should tell us that we are mere machines in feeling and acting in this manner; but still all his emotions have been the gracious operation of the Holy Spirit. If they are 'sovereign,' they are also connected in the divine plan with the use of means on our part; but if one says, I have no heart to use such means, and am therefore excusable if I fail to be saved, we need only watch him when, the next hour, perhaps, he rouses himself to perform some unpleasant duty with vigor and success, to tell him that one such act in relation to his soul and to his God would be for his everlasting peace. Men every day do that in their worldly affairs which will appear at last to their condemnation if they lose their souls.

But here we must guard ourselves against two mistakes, — one, that if we use the means of regeneration and are not converted we are not to blame; and the other (which leads to this), that preparation to comply with the Gospel may be substituted for repentance and faith. We must neither enjoin nor try to do any thing in doing which we should perish if sudden death should overtake us. "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." "He that believeth not is condemned already."

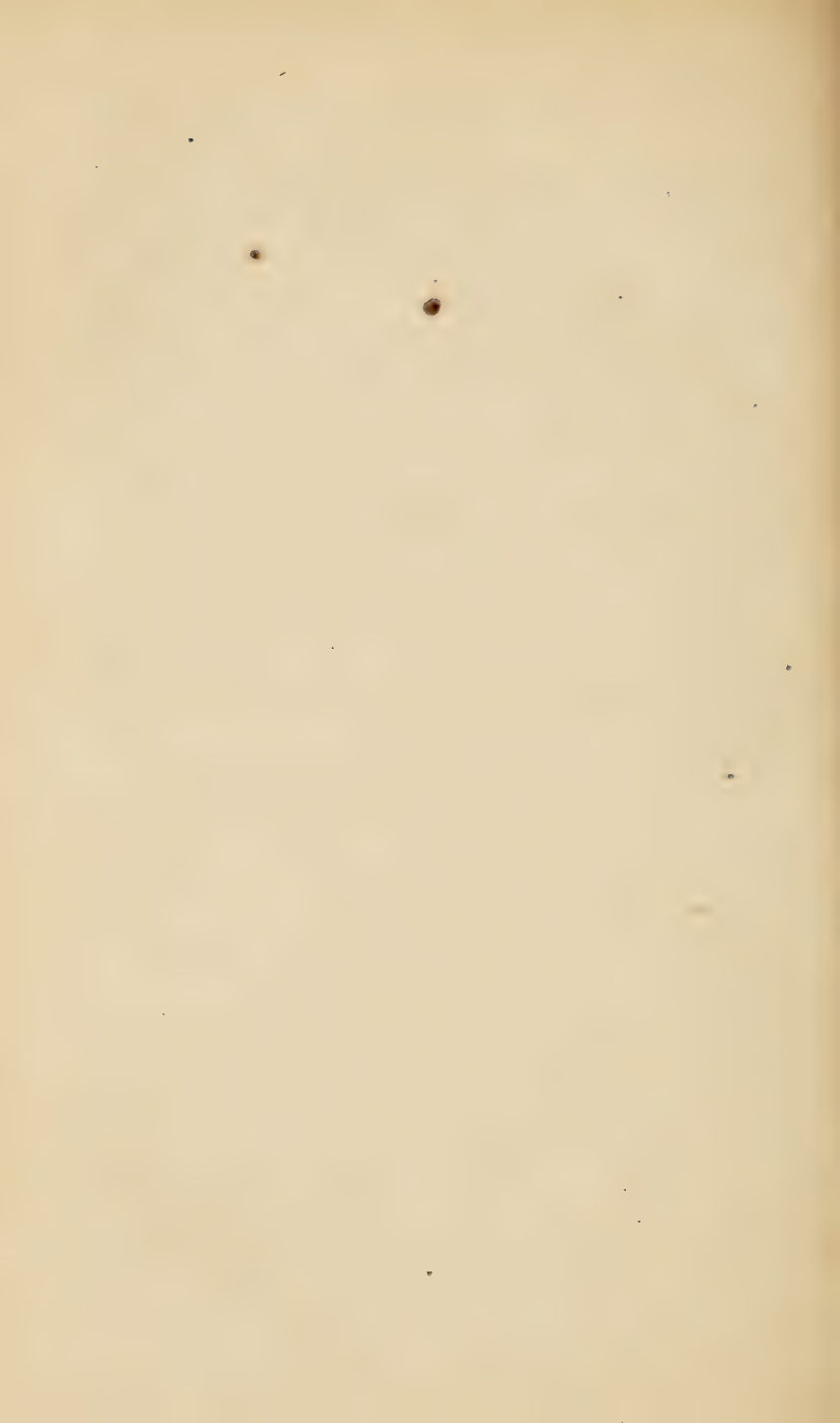
Some, who have confident hope that they love God, tell us that they have never experienced any thing cor-

responding to such a change as has now been described. To such our reply must be, with all humility, but with gratitude to God, We have experienced it, unless we are wholly deceived. We everywhere meet with those who have experienced it, when we go from place to place. It is not mere agreement of belief; it is the experience of a change such as we can designate best by the words, "born again."—It is an obvious law of testimony that the witness of those who did not see a certain thing cannot countervail the testimony of those who, being equally credible with them, did see it, and who take their oath upon it. Many ground all their hope of heaven on this work of the Spirit in their hearts as the result of the Saviour's death and intercession. They are not enthusiasts. They enjoy the confidence of their fellow-men in every thing which requires implicit trust.

Wonderful are the terms by which the New Testament sets forth the greatness of this work of regeneration in the soul of man. It is "being quickened," from being "dead in trespasses and sins;" "created anew in Christ Jesus;" and the power which accomplishes it is said to be that which the Father "wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places."

To a weak, sinful, erring creature, who, at his best estate, is altogether vanity, the doctrine of Regeneration is full of consolation and joy. God does a work in his soul when, by the mercy of God, the sinner is led

to repentance, which will survive amidst all the fluctuations of his experience, be a source of recovery and strength to him, a guarantee of final victory and salvation. Others who appeared well, but in whom the Holy Spirit never wrought the great change, will fall away. But he will be like a tree by the rivers of water. He may be shaken and tossed, and will often judge himself to be forgotten of God, and given up to Satan; but, we are "confident," says Paul, "of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth forever."



XIV.

THE CERTAIN
P E R S E V E R A N C E
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R E G E N E R A T E .

XIV.

PERSEVERANCE.

WE read in the Bible of an older book than the Bible itself, and which is said to have been written from the foundation of the world. It is mentioned seven times in Revelation, and once in the Epistle to the Philippians. It is called "the Lamb's book of life," — the book of "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." Since the acknowledged meaning of this last expression is, that the government of the world began with the work of Christ in view, and was based upon it, 'the Lamb's book of life written from the foundation of the world' implies that there is a part of our race who, to say the least, were fore-known from the foundation of the world as those who should be saved. For it is perfectly obvious that the book is not represented as containing the names of all men.

Now is this record, in the book of life, a mere historical record of those who will be saved, or is it decretive, and the record of an enactment? Plainly the latter; for the mere recording of those who were, of their unas-

sisted choice, to be saved, would have no moral effect; the book might as well be written the day after the final judgment as from the beginning of time if it were a mere historical account. But it will be said, We are told that if any man shall take away any thing from the inspired book, God will take away his part out of the book of life. How can this be done if the book of life is, in his case, a decree that he shall be saved?

For the same reason, and on the same principle, we reply, this can be said as when warnings and threatenings are addressed to those who, God foresees, will certainly be saved. If God has decreed their salvation, He has also decreed the means to be used in effecting it, and those means in the case of all free agents are, among other things, appeals to their hopes and fears; in short, they are to be governed by motives, and not like inanimate matter. Hence it is proper to address those who are certainly heirs of heaven as though they might come short of it, falling away, and never being restored. By recognizing this and applying it in reading the Bible, we shall understand how it is that the elect are addressed as being, in this world, always in danger of perdition. This is one of God's chosen methods to secure their salvation. If it be said, It is not consistent with truth and sincerity thus to address them, holding up the idea that they are in peril when God knows that they will certainly reach heaven, a perfect answer is found in the account of Paul's ship-

wreck. Paul tells the ship's company that there stood before him in a night vision the angel of God assuring him that he should certainly stand before Cæsar, and that God had given him all them that sailed with him. Here was a fixed decree. But when the shipmen were about to flee out of the ship, "Paul said to the centurion and to the soldiers, Except these abide in the ship ye cannot be saved." The means of accomplishing a decree are as truly ordained as the result itself. If writing the names in the book of life has no effect to secure the event there recorded, it is of little consequence whether the book were written before or after the event.

Let us see what the consequence is if we do not believe that God from eternity purposed that some should be brought to repentance and be saved. We must then suppose that it was with the Most High as it is with us when we send out, for example, two hundred invitations to an entertainment, calculating that about one hundred and twenty-five will accept them. There are, it is well known, certain laws of proportion in all such things. It is so in life insurance. A company issues a thousand policies, feeling sure in reckoning that a given proportion of lives will be so long continued as to make the premiums pay the losses occasioned by the deaths. There is a science of risks, laws of averages; they enter largely into the business of the world.

Some appear to think that the plan of human redemption was undertaken and is prosecuted in this way.

If in human affairs we could substitute something like God's foreknowledge for human sagacity, or increase our power of calculation up to a certain degree of perfection, the result, they seem to think, would be the same as the effect of God's foreknowledge upon the salvation of men. In fact, that which on the part of God is certain knowledge, it is held, is on the part of man ingenious calculation, which, on a large scale, arrives safely at the same point as absolute knowledge. In neither case is it allowed that it is any thing more than knowledge, no efficiency being exerted by the all-wise God, nor by the sagacious calculator, in bringing to pass the things foreseen or anticipated.

This, we think, is a comfortless and chilling view of redemption. What if God has merely written down already the names of those who will, of themselves, choose to repent? This makes the Lamb's book of life a mere score. It affords little personal advantage or consolation. It is like this: A company of sixty men are going to join the army in time of war. Let it be certainly known that the commander has had a revelation that, of the sixty, fifteen will fall, and forty-five will return. You may be one of the fifteen. True, it is some comfort to know that the chances are in every man's favor, yet fifteen must die, and each is as likely as another to be one of them. Of a thousand lives insured, yours may be one of the few which will go to make up the item of losses.

And is this all which God can do for us, namely,

send a recording angel to keep a reckoning of those who repent, and if we do so, put our names among them? And has He merely told us that, instead of doing this progressively through time, He has done it all at once and beforehand? and that this constitutes the Lamb's book of life?

One objection, among others, to any such interpretation, is surely the one already noticed 'as made against the decretive nature of the Lamb's book, an objection which now returns with force upon this opposite interpretation. For if the Lamb's book of life be a mere historical record, how are we to understand that which is said about blotting out, or not blotting out, one's name from that book? Blotting out a name from a record cannot in any sense be possible, if the record of that name be the mere record of something which has taken place, namely, repentance and faith. We cannot blot out an historical fact. If we choose to say that the meaning is, God will not suppress the name of one who has repented, that would merely be saying that God would speak the truth. It cannot be a subject of reward or threatening, any more than for the annalist to say, I will not blot out the present year from the world's records, or, I will not suffer this year to remain as an historical fact.

Candor will oblige every one to say that whatever theory he may adopt on this subject, questions may be put to him which he cannot answer. We find the fewest difficulties, however, in our own minds, by adopting

the theory which gives to the Most High supreme control over the volitions of men, instead of taking a stand, as it were, to defend human liberty against Divine encroachments or the exercise of arbitrary power. We must believe in the perfect accountableness of man, and the infinite sincerity of God, or we have no heart to preach the Gospel; at the same time, we would adopt any plausible theory rather than feel that the ruler of the universe and his plans are at the mercy of his creatures. Let us see how offensively this latter part of the alternative strikes the mind of a Calvinist; for the pictures which Rev. John Wesley draws of Calvinism are not more repulsive to him, than this is to us. Perhaps by looking at these difficult subjects with each other's eyes, we shall be led to the conclusion that we need forbearance and modesty in expressing our opinions. This, then, is the way in which, perhaps, a Calvinist would represent his opponent's theory:

All men being left wholly to themselves, and God doing nothing to make certain the salvation of one or more souls, for fear of doing injustice to the rest, and to avoid the charge of partiality, the scheme of redemption by the incarnation, sufferings, and death of the Son of God is undertaken without any certainty derived from the purposes of God that one soul will accept the offers of mercy and be saved. Redemption, then, was undertaken as men prosecute commerce, the fisheries, hunting, and the search for gold. Some returns must, in the nature of things, be obtained; but it

depends wholly on our choice whether one, a few, or many, or all, will be saved. After the judgment, God will sum up the results of the great scheme, and the holy universe will feel happy that things have turned out as well as they have done; they might have been worse, but thanks to the human race that so many of them concluded to accept the offers of eternal mercy. God's government, therefore, is administered by his subjects,—He, however, having infinite foresight and being able to adapt his measures so as to make the best of that which the perfect free-will of his creatures may choose to do. He decrees nothing relating to the conduct of men; He merely foresees how they will act, and then He acts, accordingly. For example, it was indispensable that the Saviour should be crucified as a sacrifice for sins; a good being could not be crucified by good men; wicked men must therefore do it. But will they do it? It would be wrong that Christ should be “delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God,” for then how could “wicked hands” be to blame for the act? Here is a predicament. But the Most High looks forward and discovers that, happily for the great scheme, wicked men, if left wholly to themselves, will accomplish the deed. A traitor will insinuate himself into the number of the twelve disciples, and Caiaphas, Pilate, Herod will act their parts, and even the soldiers who shall be detailed to attend the crucifixion will part the garments under the cross precisely as it was foreseen they would do. In all this

no divine agency is concerned, men, being left wholly to themselves, perform certain actions in foresight of which God made his plans. For, had it been foreseen that men would take it upon themselves to act differently, the plans of God would all have been otherwise; for how can He influence the human mind where doing wrong is concerned, and not be the author of sin? Thus the creatures of God determine the course of his administration, and there is no supreme control over that which is the highest province of administration, the human will.

And why, it is said, do any seem to adopt such a theory, or a theory which involves such obvious inferences? To save the character of God from the imputation of partiality, and of being the author of the sins of men. We think that this can be done more effectually and more honorably to all concerned, and in a way which gives us a Supreme Being into whose hands we can safely place all the thoughts and actions of men and devils, leaving them perfectly free and accountable, and at the same time enthroning Jehovah over all his works, especially over things which most nearly concern the happiness of the intelligent universe, and these are, above all, the actions of every moral agent; for it concerns the happiness of the universe that these should be perfectly under the control of God.

One scheme represents God as making offers to sinful men oftentimes with great importunity, prospering here in his endeavors, and failing there, owing wholly

to the nature of the respective cases, some being tractable, others obdurate, the purpose of God being to save every one whom He can possibly prevail upon to accept his proposals.

We think it more consistent with Scripture to believe that God, foreseeing that all men, if left to themselves, would perish, "out of his mere good pleasure, from all eternity elected some to everlasting life," and "did enter into a covenant of grace to deliver them out of the estate of sin and misery, and to bring them into an estate of salvation by a Redeemer."

Were it not for the foreknowledge of God there would be no trouble on this subject. How an omniscient, omnipotent, and benevolent God can sincerely offer pardon, with entreaty, to men who He foresees will not accept the offer, and whom He could as well persuade as He does persuade others, is incomprehensible to many, who therefore adopt the theory that God has from eternity made no selection of those who are to be saved, and that He does nothing to determine the choice of any who repent.

Is, then, the foreknowledge of God a misfortune in the Ruler of the Universe? Would it be better that He should not understand from the first in what way men will treat his proposals? For if in any case He knows that one will reject them, He cannot, upon the theory now stated, consistently approach that man with offers of pardon. Is it benevolent, even, to let him live, in a world where the general offers of mercy may

tempt the unhappy man to think, sometimes, that even he may be saved? If God treats him in any way fitted to change his feelings toward God, is it not cruel? For God sees that he will not be saved; therefore how can He, consistently with benevolence, suffer him to listen, with others who will repent, to the persuasive offers of the Gospel? True benevolence would seem to require that his days be cut short, so as to lessen the amount of his guilt.

God must be greatly confined in his selection of instruments to accomplish his purposes, if He is obliged to choose them only from among those who, of their own accord, conclude to repent. Of course there was no such thing as election in the case of Saul of Tarsus. It was foreseen that speaking to him out of heaven would convert him. With another, it would not succeed. It happened exceedingly well in this case that it did succeed, for Saul was precisely the man for the work to be accomplished; but it all depended on the caprice of the man himself whether he would accept or reject the grace of God, if the theory now alluded to be true. Unquestionably there are men among those who God sees will not repent, whom it is exceedingly desirable to enlist in his cause; but alas! they are the leaders of the opposition, and they cannot be made to change sides by any influence which the Almighty power of God can employ consistently with their freedom!

We believe that the whole tenor of the Bible is opposed to such views. We believe that God has made

it certain that some will be saved; that He interposes and makes men willing; that He "has mercy on whom He will have mercy, and whom He will He hardeneth;" that He ensures the final perseverance of every one whom He chooses; that "the gifts and calling of God are," on his part, "without repentance;" that "the Lamb's book of life" is the record of those whom it was determined from eternity to make willing and to save. And still every man is free and accountable.

There is a passage in the ninth chapter of Romans which seems quietly to disclose the idea that God exerts a different influence in the salvation of men from any thing which he does in connection with their sinfulness or perdition. "Vessels of wrath *fitted* to destruction" (the participle is passive), is the expression used in speaking of the reprobate; but "the vessels of mercy," it is said, "*he* had afore prepared unto glory." At the same time, this chapter tells us of divine sovereignty in the case of Esau and Jacob, and the question, 'What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God?' shows that something more than foresight is intended; for there is, of course, no unrighteousness in foreknowledge.

Such passages as these appear to us conclusively to show the scripturalness of these things:

"These words spake Jesus and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son that thy Son also may glorify thee. As thou

hast given him power over all flesh that he may give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.”

“Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you.”

“And this is the father’s will,—that of all which he hath given me, I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day.” “For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son.—Moreover whom he did predestinate them he also called, and whom he called them he also justified, and whom he justified them he also glorified.”

“My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me, and I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, and no man shall pluck them out of my hand.”

“Being confident of this very thing that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it unto the day of Jesus Christ.”

“Who are kept (literally, *garrisoned*) by the power of God through faith unto salvation.”

“In whom after that ye believed ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.”

“But we are bound to give thanks for you, brethren beloved, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the spirit and belief of the truth.”

The certain perseverance of the regenerate is effected by a supernatural, divine change wrought in their natures, which is indestructible; and by promises, warnings, and threatenings employed by the Holy Spirit, with all the means of grace under his direction, and with his constant influence in their hearts.

‘Is it necessary to warn, threaten, promise, and, in many other ways powerfully influence, those who, God knows, will certainly be saved?’

This is God’s chosen way of fulfilling his purposes in their salvation. They do not know that their names are in the Lamb’s book of life any further than they give scriptural evidence of being born of the Spirit.

The common reply to this is, If a man will certainly be saved, it being so decreed from eternity, he will be saved at all events.—Here is a great error. If he is to be saved, it being so decreed, he will not be saved ‘at all events,’ but he will be saved by being warned and threatened, by having promises and encouragements addressed to him, by fear and by hope, by being tempted and resisting temptation. Life and death will be continually set before him, blessing and a curse.—But these promises and threatenings seem to many a conclusive proof that the salvation of no man is made certain.

In the book of Proverbs there are exhortations to industry;—“be diligent to know the state of thy flocks, and look well to thy herds;” “go to the ant, thou sluggard;” “seest thou a man diligent in his business? he shall stand before kings.”—God has made it sure

that certain men shall raise crops; but it is equally certain that they will comply with these directions; they will not succeed "at all events," even though success is decreed to them. We are subjects of a moral government. A moral government is a government administered by motives, not by force.

This being so, it is to be expected that such passages as these should be found in the Word of God: "Let us, therefore, fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it." "If the righteous man turn away from his righteousness and commit iniquity, all his righteousness shall not be remembered." "Having, therefore, these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and of the Spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." "If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him." Add to these the promises made by the Saviour at the close of the first three chapters of Revelation, "to him that overcometh."

There is a passage in connection with this subject which is easy of solution upon the foregoing principles. — "For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance, seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame."

Some say, 'How can Regeneration be more completely expressed? Here, then, the apostasy of regenerate persons is explicitly recognized.'

To this it is replied, Granting, for a moment, that the regenerate are here intended, and that the consequences of their apostasy will be as described, it does not follow that the regenerate will apostatize; for it is the chosen method of divine grace to warn and threaten them, and so to keep them from falling.

Consider how Peter addresses those whom he calls 'Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth!' — "Ye, therefore, beloved, seeing that ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away by the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness." There is no more real difficulty in supposing such words to be addressed to the elect than the passage under consideration.

To understand this passage, we must notice in what connection and for what purpose it is spoken. The chapter begins thus: "Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptism, and of laying on of hands, and of the resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. And this will we do if God permit. *For* it is impossible for those who were once enlightened" — etc.

It is plain that there is an intimate connection, a sequence, between these two parts of the chapter. How are we to explain it? The following paraphrase may throw light upon it. The apostle seems to say:

‘These “first principles” of Christianity may be embraced by those who have an intellectual, speculative belief of them. Let us beware of resting in such belief; let us go on to experimental knowledge; *for*, unless we do, we, of course, are in danger of turning back, the heart not being established by grace; and to turn back to infidelity after having once been so thoroughly and firmly instructed and persuaded in our understandings, is fatal; because, to every appeal such an apostate will say, I have understood all this, and I am thoroughly persuaded that Christianity is a delusion. Where, then, can you begin to persuade such a man? he has “trodden under foot the Son of God, he has done despite to the Spirit of Grace, he has counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, an unholy thing.”

‘But you, beloved, have gone further than this mere intellectual, speculative belief. You have given proof that a work of grace has been wrought in your hearts, “in that ye have ministered to the saints and do minister. And we desire that every one of you do show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end;” and that you will thus avoid the peril of those who are merely intellectual in their belief, and are always

liable to apostasy; from which, the more firmly they have previously been convinced, the more difficult it is to recover them.

One difficulty in the minds of some as to such an interpretation may be in the words, "the blood of the covenant wherewith they were sanctified," — it being supposed that this must refer to regenerate persons. But we are told that "Jesus also, that he might *sanctify the people with his own blood*, suffered without the gate." Here, reference is made to the largest influence of the Saviour's death as a ground of pardon; and the use of the word *sanctified*, in the Old Testament, as seen by a Concordance, makes it clear that as subjects of the dispensation of grace "we are sanctified by the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all."

Let us turn to an opposite interpretation. Many claim that the passage teaches the doctrine of falling from grace, that is, that one who may have experienced all which the Holy Ghost ever does for the soul in this world, may, nevertheless, fall away. We think that the passage itself contains a refutation of this interpretation. It says that "it is impossible to renew them to repentance." Hence no one who falls from grace can ever be converted again. This is contradicted by daily experience even among those who hold to the interpretation just mentioned, which is mournful in the extreme. There is nothing in Calvinism so "gloomy." We speak peace and hope to the backslider, however far he may have gone, "being confident of this very

thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Christ.”¹

¹ The following anecdote, though some may think it too colloquial, is a good illustration of the subject :

CALVINISTS AND ARMINIANS. — It is a remark of frequent occurrence, that if a pious Calvinist and pious Arminian engage together in devotional exercises, they speak the same language, so that a stranger to their persons could not tell which was the Calvinist and which the Arminian. They both ascribe their salvation, from first to last, to free, sovereign grace, reigning through the righteousness by Jesus Christ, irrespective of human merit or human ability.

The Arminian will say this is because the Calvinist cannot carry out his principles, but for the time is forced to take Arminian ground. We think not. An enlightened Calvinist is never more a believer in the sovereign, efficacious, electing grace of God, than when he bows before him in prayer, or exhorts his fellow-sinners to come to Christ. It is only when a pious Arminian, who knows his own heart, views Calvinism through a distorted medium, that he regards it as a monster only to be abhorred and opposed. It is one of the happiest features of the present religious movement in our country, that persons of different denominations and shades of belief meet together in perfect harmony of feeling and sentiment, and unite in acts of prayer and praise.

The following incident forcibly illustrates one of the “Difficulties of Arminianism:”

Falling from Grace. — Several years ago, when the Rev. Abel Pearson, D. D., was travelling on a preaching tour through East Tennessee, he stopped to spend the night with a relative in Sevier County. He was a Methodist, and it was not long before the Doctor and Mr. — were conversing very earnestly upon the subject of religion. Mr. — remarked that he was a Metho-

‘But Christ says, “Those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost but the son of

dist from experience—being himself a living witness of the truth of Mr. Wesley’s doctrine of falling from grace. And he proceeded to relate to Dr. Pearson that part of his history which he regarded as conclusive on the subject in question. He had, he said, experienced a change of heart many years previous, and, although he had run well for a season, enjoying the undoubted presence of God, yet he had unhappily fallen—lost the last vestige of religion. By and by the grace of God sought him out again, and he was converted a second time, and then he was confident he was a child of God. Thus, in his own experience, had he the clearest proof of the truth of the doctrine of falling from grace.

Having concluded this triumphant argument in support of his favorite doctrine, he paused for Dr. Pearson to reply; but the Doctor only looked solemn, and ejaculated, “What a pity!”

Silence ensued for some minutes. At length Dr. Pearson asked: “Are you perfectly sure that you experienced a change of heart that first time?”

Mr. ——— was quite sure. There could be no mistake. He believed in a religion that he could feel. He always *knew* when he had religion, and when he had not; and he always *knew* where he got it, and just when he lost it. There was no room for mistake.

“And are you quite sure,” continued the Doctor, “that you lost all the religion you got that first time?”

“Yes, quite sure,” replied Mr. ———. He was perfectly conscious of having lost his religion—indeed he had become worse than he had ever been before.

“What a pity!” again sighed Dr. Pearson,—“What a pity!”

For the second and third time the same questions were put,

perdition.” Hence, some who are given to Christ in the covenant of redemption may be lost.’

This mistake arises from not considering the meaning, in the New Testament, of the phrase, “none of them—save”—one of another description. “There were many widows in *Israel*, but to none of them was Elias sent, *save* to a woman of *Sarepta*.” “And there were many lepers in *Israel*,—but none of them was cleansed *save* Naaman the *Syrian*.” Hence the meaning of Christ is, ‘none of those whom thou gavest me is lost; but the son of perdition is lost.’ Therefore Judas was not of those who were given to Christ.

and the same answers given, Dr. Pearson only responding, “What a pity, Mr. ———, what a pity!”

By this time Mr. ——— was thoroughly nervous, and asked impatiently, “Why do you say so, Dr. Pearson—why do you say ‘What a pity?’”

“Because,” replied the Doctor, in that peculiarly solemn manner which so distinguished him, “because, if you are not mistaken, you are a lost man, *a lost man!* Paul says, ‘If a man fall away, it is impossible to renew him again;’ and if you once had religion, and have lost it, it is a hopeless case with you—there remains nothing in your case but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, that shall devour the adversaries. A lost man! a lost man!”

Mr. ——— sat silent for some time, evidently in no very enviable state of mind. At length a ray of hope beamed upon his countenance. “Dr. Pearson,” said he, “I had not thought of the subject just in that light before, and, on reflection, *I may have been mistaken* about having had religion that first time; but I *thought* I had.”—*Record of O. S. Presbyterian Church.*

Apostates were never regenerated. "Many will say unto me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name cast out devils and done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity." "They went out from us because they were not of us; for if they had been of us, doubtless they would have continued with us." "Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?"

The consequences of this doctrine are, that, in the free exercise of their own powers and faculties, God will keep the regenerate from final apostasy. "The Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom." "God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able, but will, with the temptation, also make a way for your escape, that ye may be able to bear it." "The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord, and he delighteth in his way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down; but the Lord upholdeth him with his hand." "The righteous shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall grow stronger and stronger." "I will visit their transgressions with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes; nevertheless my loving kindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail."

'But what makes the perseverance of the regenerate certain?' We answer, The promise of God. There is nothing in grace to perpetuate itself. God has un-

dertaken to save some of our fallen race, all of whom, but for his interposition, would either not have come to Him, or, having begun, would, in time of temptation, fall away.

‘But this is a dangerous doctrine. It teaches us that we may be wholly at our ease, and we shall be saved, at all events.’ No one ever taught such a doctrine who had any credit with evangelical believers. The doctrine contains a perfect safeguard against presumption; for ‘perseverance in holiness’ is a different thing from perseverance in a mere hope and expectation of being saved. If one makes a pillow of this doctrine, he shows that he is not regenerate; if it encourages him to fight the good fight of faith, and to heed the warnings and promises of God, and so to perfect holiness in the fear of God, he shows that God has begun a good work in him; and in all such, this work will be carried on until the day of Jesus Christ.

‘But this doctrine amounts to nothing more nor less than fate. All that will be necessary at the last day will be to open the book of life, and ascertain who were written there from the foundation of the world.’

This is, in a most impressive way, corrected by a passage relating to the final judgment: “And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and *the dead were judged out of the things which were written in the books,*

according to their works.” The book of life, then, is not to be the rule of judgment. The record in this book will exactly correspond with the results in the books which record our works, and those results, by the infinite mercy of God, will be made to fulfil his eternal purpose, all, however, in perfect consistency with our accountability.

This doctrine is an exceeding comfort and help to weak, trembling man, showing him that having been brought to Christ, salvation will be made sure; that the Holy Spirit will enable him to continue in the way of obedience to the end. The emblem in the Pilgrim’s Progress, where one threw water on a fire, which, nevertheless, grew brighter, because a hand behind was constantly ministering oil to the flame, expresses the truth with regard to our sanctification.

This doctrine does no injustice to any. If some are unwilling to repent and believe, and to strive after holiness, there is no ground for complaint if God persuades and enables others so to do. It does not prevent one soul from coming to Christ who would otherwise believe on Him. On the contrary, it makes it sure that whoever will come shall never perish. Every one can prove that his name is in the book of life by complying with certain directions. But, one says, ‘I cannot comply unless my name be there.’ These words, uttered in a right spirit, would lead to salvation. Indeed, we never come to Christ till we feel our helpless and lost estate. A querulous inebriate, raising

the cup to his lips, may say, 'Let the Most High paralyze my appetite, if he would have me reform; He has saved others.' Or, one equally abandoned may say, 'I am so sinful and weak, my will is so unstable, I am so hard and blind, that, unless God interposes and saves me, I perish.' This man would go down to his house justified rather than the other. His confession of helplessness would be the first step towards salvation.

Some will certainly be saved. There is a book of life. It was written from the foundation of the world, and it is the Lamb's book, containing, from the beginning of time, 'the results of redemption. The names which are there will never be blotted out. Through trials, temptation, conflicts, and with many doubts and fears, sometimes ready to despair, and again plucking up courage and looking wholly to Christ, those who are written in that book can exult — 'Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.' All the attributes of God are engaged to bring every one to heaven whose name is written there.

It is equally true that any name not already there never will be added to that book. It was written "from the foundation of the world." Hence it is finished, and as no name can be erased, no one can be inserted. Every one whose name is not there will continue to procrastinate, or to reject Christ, or to cavil, or to neglect the great salvation, and when at last the dead are judged out of the things written in the books, these

books will confirm the book of life in its omission of those names.

‘What shall we then say to these things?’ Plainly this: ‘If God be for us, who can be against us?’

Some may say, ‘I will take the risk of election, reprobation, perseverance, or failure, and let come on me what will.’ This, surely, is not one of “the things that accompany salvation.”

Others may say: I would give every thing to know that my name is in the book of life.

We may inquire of such, what they would do if they were sure that their names are there?

Would they wait for God to convert them, without effort on their own part? Perhaps they answer, No, we would at once begin the Christian life. But if they do this now, their names are proved to be already there. “He that believeth—is passed from death unto life.”

In concluding this general subject of Free Agency and Divine Efficiency, one thing is of such practical importance that it may be well to give it special prominence, in this place.

Human responsibility is the truth which all other truths connected with this subject must be employed to enforce. This is the side of the system which must be turned toward man, while the equally great and essential things in the system pour all their rays into

it. Some greatly err in the order in which they place and use these truths when they seek the conversion and sanctification of men. It is true, for experience proves it, that the doctrines of Election and Perseverance are a powerful means of awakening and conversion, but it is because they are then used as a pressure to set home the truth of responsibility. They are the arms of the weapon, but this is the point and the barb. Let Election and Perseverance be presented as motives to effort, and they are mighty; let them be presented as abstract truths, and they lull the sinner and the Christian to sleep. The doctrines of the Gospel injudiciously applied become practical errors. We would not think of pouring at random from any jar in the apothecary's shop, and yet every jar is, for its intended use, as good as the rest. Every truth of the Gospel can be so employed as to do harm, though, it must be added, that it ceased to be a truth when taken out of its connection with other truths. Two striking illustrations of the proper way to employ the doctrines of grace are found, one, in this exhortation following a doctrinal statement: "Now, then, we are ambassadors for Christ,—be ye reconciled to God;" and another, in this: "Having, therefore, these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God."

We do not honor God, though we may suppose that we are doing it, when we suppress or lower the doctrine of human responsibility with a view to elevate the

sovereignty of God. He has chosen to govern men not as he controls matter, but as free. For an imperfect illustration, — we know that life is a far greater manifestation of divine power and skill when it acts by muscles and wings as instruments of volition in the creature, than though the creature were an automaton, moved like a ship by the wind, or a machine by steam power. Perhaps there is no greater mystery in the divine administration than this, that God has complete control of the will, and at the same time, that the agent is completely responsible. How this is can no more be shown than we can explain how life, as we term it, acts upon the muscles. God can harden Pharaoh's heart and yet Pharaoh shall be wholly to blame, and not only so but confess it, and say to Moses, "I have sinned against the Lord your God, and against you." God can make Judas betray Christ, and with determinate counsel and foreknowledge He can use wicked hands to crucify and slay Him, and still hold each sinner justly accountable for his doings.

That this will ever be explained further than we now see it, admits of a question. Perhaps it will forever be the occasion of cavil and blasphemy to wicked spirits who will never cease to accuse God of injustice, partiality, arbitrary power, saying, "For who hath resisted his will?" Or the clearer perception and the forced acknowledgment of it may excite the evil passions of the lost, by showing them that God used their wickedness for a good end, and that they have not disappointed

nor circumvented the Almighty. But to those who fear and obey Him, it will ever be their highest joy to fall, like the four and twenty elders, at his feet, and say, "For thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created." The will of intelligent beings and its moral government, constitute that feature of creation which is the chief glory of the divine administration.

XV.

CHRISTIAN PERFECTION.

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THE Bible tells us of perfect men since the apostasy, and they are designated as such even by the Most High. Noah 'was perfect in his generations.' Of Job, it is said, — "And that man was perfect and upright." — We are told that 'God will not cast away a perfect man.' 'Mark the perfect man and behold the upright.' The New Testament says, 'Let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.' "That ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God." "That we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus." We read of "perfecting holiness in the fear of God." "In him is the love of God perfected." "If we love one another, his love is perfected in us." "Put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness."

Is sinless perfection intended in these expressions? And, Is sinless perfection attainable in this life?

Some say that these expressions imply that men can attain to a sinless state before death; that it is im-

plied in some of these phrases, and in others like them; and that they themselves have attained to that state.

A principal argument relied upon by the advocates of sinless perfection in this life, is, that God commands us to be perfect, and that God would not command that which we cannot perform.—Moreover, it is said that God has promised to effect this sinless condition in all who will comply with the condition, which is, Absolute faith in the justifying righteousness of Christ.

We meet this argument in favor of sinless perfection, at once, by an explicit denial of the assumption on which it rests, which is, That God will not command us to do that which we have no moral ability to perform. This we hold to be a delusion. For if God commanded men to do only that which they are morally capable of doing (bodily and mental incapacity, of course, being out of the question), it would follow that the law of God must adapt itself to every man's disposition, and there is no one perfect standard of obligation. Let a man be so far indisposed to do right that custom and habit shall become a second nature; then, in proportion to this sinful inability his obligation diminishes. A man has, therefore, only to become exceedingly wicked, and he will annihilate all moral obligation.

Granting our nature to be in a depraved condition, and that no mere man, since the fall, has kept the commandments of God, but 'doth daily break them in thought, word, and deed,' shall God propose a lower

standard of duty? Shall it be said, 'Take the patriarchs and prophets for your standard; you cannot excel them; aim at their attainments'? or, shall it be said, "Be ye holy, for I am holy"? "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect"? Every good man, however conscious of imperfection and of inability to reach the standard of divine holiness, would naturally regard it as a calamity to have a human standard of excellence proposed to him. Instead of its being a reason for despondency, it is honorable to man that the divine nature is made the standard to which he must aspire.

We must bear in mind a self-evident truth, that obligation is not limited by moral ability. A man may be under obligation to do that which he is morally unable to perform. It never can cease to be Satan's duty to love God, though he will forever be morally incapable of doing so.

But we read, "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly, and I pray God your whole spirit, and soul, and body, be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it."

Other passages may be quoted, of the same tenor, which, however, prove conclusively that something other than sinless perfection is here contemplated.

"Who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ."
"That we may present every man perfect in Christ

Jesus." "That we should be holy and without blame before him in love." There is also a class of passages, referred to in the opening of this lecture which, to say the least, are as strong as these, — men being called "perfect" by the Most High himself. We also read of an express command from God addressed to an individual, requiring of him perfection: "And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the Lord appeared unto him and said, I am the Almighty God; walk before me and be thou perfect."

Now the Word of God which contains these things, declares that "by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified." We find proofs of imperfection in the very men who are expressly called "perfect." If Job deserved to be called "perfect" when God began to afflict him, he surely was no worse when God had tried him in the furnace; yet even then we hear him say, "I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes." Even such a man as the beloved John, in his old age, says, "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us." If Paul could ever have arrived at sinless perfection in this world it was time that he should have reached it at the date of the Epistle in which he says, "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended." "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect, but I follow after." — He says, long after his conversion, and when he had such experience in religion that he could write the Epistle to the Romans, 'I find a law in my members warring

against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.' It is a point in controversy whether he is here describing a regenerate or an unregenerate man. One thing is certain: All who have not, in their own esteem, arrived at sinless perfection, testify that their own present experience is expressed in those words.

How can it be that a man is designated as "perfect," when it is expressly denied that a sinless condition is reached here? For Job himself said, "If I say, I am perfect, it shall also prove me perverse." And another says, "There is not a just man on earth that doeth good and sinneth not." Are we to understand that an imperfect condition in a good man is counted for perfectness; that the law of God has lowered its standard; that the precious metal is now so coined that a mixture of the pure and the base passes at the original value of the unalloyed currency?

The word "perfect," as used in Scripture in speaking of human character, means, An upright, pious life. As applied to human nature, perfectness does not mean the same as when applied to angels. The artificial light in a room may be perfect; but it is not the perfectness of sun-light. An image of plaster may be perfect; the marble statue has perfectness of a different order. Human perfectness is, under the Gospel, consistent with being destitute of any thing which could be a justifying righteousness; that is, a man may be, in the scriptural sense, "a perfect man" who, judged

by the perfect law of God, is utterly condemned. Noah, Daniel, and Job, judged by their works, could no more claim heaven than the penitent thief; yet the Most High refers to them as "perfect" men. One who disallows sin, whose enlightened and sincere endeavor to please and serve God gives character to his daily life, is a "perfect" man, even while he is condemning himself and when if tried by his conformity to the law of God he would utterly fail of salvation. Perfect men in the sense in which the Bible calls them such, are described in the first verses of the hundred and nineteenth Psalm, in which there is no higher proof of possessing the thing described than the verse which represents the writer as yet striving after it,—“O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes.” All this is consistent with imperfection and frailty, and with self-loathing and shame. The prayers of Daniel and Ezra are illustrations.

There is an “Evangelical obedience,” that is, a compliance with the terms of the Gospel, which leads to justification. They who have evangelical obedience have that perfectness of which the Bible speaks. Peter refers to it when he calls his Christian brethren, “Elect—unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus.” Leighton, speaking of these words, says, “This obedience, though imperfect, yet hath a certain (if I may so say) *imperfect perfection*.”

But sinful men, relying on the sufferings and death of Christ as the ground of their justification, are deliv-

ered from condemnation ; they are accepted as righteous. This is not because the obedience of Christ makes up their deficiency ; but they are “justified,” in consequence of their faith in him. We have already, at the close of the preceding subject, considered the difference between pardon and justification. But men are not called “perfect” merely because they are “justified ;” perfectness, in the scriptural sense, implies and requires endeavor, and sustained endeavor, but without any specification of time before which the endeavor cannot be verified. A young convert may as truly be called “perfect” as an aged Christian ; for his endeavor to walk so as to please God may be as uniform and sincere.

The meaning of justification is, There is no condemnation. This justification is not the same as personal goodness, though it is a means of effecting it. It is not a declaration of innocence, but of satisfaction on the part of the law, its requirements having been met by something which is accepted as an equivalent ; the sinner is not condemned, because his faith is “counted to him for righteousness.” Neither is there any thing progressive in this ; it is instantaneous, it is begun and finished in a moment. “He that believeth is passed from death unto life.” Christ is not our personal goodness ; his character is not transferred to us, but his sufferings and death are imputed to us ; not ascribed, but, reckoned to our account, in the way of acquittal.

When this has taken place, there remains yet a work

to be undertaken. It is hard to say how much imperfection may remain, and the man be regenerate. Here is the region of sanctification. In some, there are low measures of conformity to God, while, nevertheless, faith in Christ is sincere, and the man is, for his faith, justified.

It might be in the power of God to create holiness as He creates gravitation, or electricity. But it would be a different thing from the holiness of a moral agent. Holiness is a union of divine agency, and of moral action on the part of the creature. However much we may ascribe to divine efficiency, the action of an accountable being is, of course, indispensable in holiness; for God cannot repent for us, nor believe, nor obey. It is evident, therefore, that conformity to God must vary in those who are, nevertheless, justified;—justification admitting of no degrees, but sanctification being progressive, and in all conceivable measures.

When one is making endeavors after conformity to God, striving that his life shall be governed by the divine precepts, his conscience also being enlightened, and in accordance with the revealed rule of duty, he is called “a perfect man,” notwithstanding imperfections, inconsistencies, and failures. But how far these things may continue without a just forfeiture of that name and character, omniscience alone, which sees the heart, can decide. One thing is certain (if the histories of the very best men and women are a guide),—the perfect man will have a continual sense of failure,

and will be always deploring his unworthiness. Every one may have the highest opinion of him, while he lies in the dust before God, on account of his deficiencies and sins. And, indeed, he is never freed from just condemnation, if judged by the state of his heart and life, not even for a single hour. He deserves condemnation even while he is in the act of trusting in Christ. The Saviour's merits, as already said, do not make up a deficiency, strike a balance; the man's works are no part of the ground on which he is justified. "Justification is an act of God's free grace, wherein he pardoneth all our sins and *accepteth us as* righteous in his sight only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us and received by faith alone."

Conformity to God, in its different degrees, is the ground of reward, but not of justification. Good works are, in their place, as essential as faith, for there is no faith without good fruit. But who would build his house on plaster of Paris, or lime-stones, or glass, or pine, for a foundation? Yet when we come to the ceilings and stucco-work, the windows and the whole of the inside, these materials are as indispensable as the foundation; but they cannot take its place. "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." The law, which cannot justify us, is still the only rule of duty. The atonement removes our condemnation when we accept it, and it also prepares the way for our increasing conformity to God, but it does not make up a balance for us with which to

discharge our indebtedness. Christ atones for the first sin, and for the last, and for all. Should any one of us live as long as Methuselah and be preëminently good, still he must come to the same point with the penitent thief and be saved by grace; at the same time his goodness would be most largely rewarded, while it could not be the ground of his pardon.

Some earnestly long to arrive at a state in which they will no more be subject to the power of temptation and to failure. There is no such state in this world. We might as well say that there is a state of not slipping on ice. Our walk through life must be like walking in slippery weather, and we shall constantly need to bear in mind the exhortation, "Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall." We shall never have as much sanctification in this world as we desire, unless we get to be, in our own esteem, sinless. We must make up our minds that this longing after entire goodness, this "O for a closer walk with God," this panting for the wafer-brooks, this "following hard after Thee," is to continue, and to increase, while we live; while justification is without degrees; and so is regeneration. Paul intimates our constant liability to sin, when he describes the Christian soldier: "Wherefore take unto yourselves the whole armor of God—and having done all, to stand,"—not go into tent, but "stand, therefore,"—sword in hand, the shield ready, like a man in a battle, having disposed of one foe, prepared for the next assault.

As to those who wish to arrive at a comfortable, easy state, in which they will be free from the power of temptation and spiritual trial, we say, It would not be well for them in this probationary and disciplinary state. A canal passage to heaven, free from storms and danger of wreck, is not good; an ocean voyage is better for the character. We need conflicts to develop the spiritual susceptibilities, and to strengthen us. But there is a way in which those who long for peace may obtain it. It is by crediting the assurances of the Bible with regard to perfect justification through Christ; by believing that one word, "Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." A book was written many years ago by Rev. Mr. Stoddard, of Northampton, the title of which, in the style of those days, contains a great truth: "The Safety of Appearing Before God in the Righteousness of Jesus Christ." If we should see the man Christ Jesus at the bar of God, we should have no fears for the result as it regarded Him. We shall be as safe there as He, if "found in him, not having our own righteousness, but the righteousness which is of God by faith." All our goodness, were it a thousand times more than it is, cannot begin to save us; but, saved through Christ's righteousness, our goodness, our works, will be the ground of reward, and in no sense of justification. But some appear to be unwilling thus to depend on Christ; and they seek for a consciousness of being perfect as the ground of

their peace. They should distinguish between a conscience void of offence, and freedom from a degenerate nature; between a heart fixed on God, seeking his face, mourning at departures from Him, and a consciousness of being sinless, or perfectly conformed, in heart, word, and deed, to the "commandment which is exceeding broad." David, in the eighteenth Psalm, dwells on the joy of a good conscience; he exults in it; he represents God as riding in a chariot and flying to his aid on the wings of the wind, and rewarding him according to his ways, "according to the cleanness of my hands in his eyesight." But this was perfectly consistent with a sense of utter unworthiness, and of being in a perishing state without the mercy of God.

Sinless perfection, as a prevailing error in a community, very soon cures itself, by degenerating into looseness of life, or ceasing under the corrective power of experience. It is like the self-limiting diseases of childhood. But the error is pernicious, because it lets down moral obligation to our own low attainments. Then, if tempted, the perfectly sanctified man is liable to reason in this way: I have done thus and thus, but it cannot be sin, for I am sinless; hence it cannot be wrong. Such persons are either deceivers or deceived. They may be both. Yet many of those who dream of sinless perfection in this world are amiable, and of a susceptible, tender spirit, who sincerely desire to be delivered from the painfulness of a state in which they must ever be conscious of coming short of the divine requirements.

These must learn that this degenerate nature will go with them to the grave, with a hurt which regeneration does not cure; that in being born again they have new tastes, new desires, new hopes and fears, which will meet with resistance from their natural appetites and passions, and that there will be long war within them, between the house of David and the house of Saul, the tide of affairs, however, being turned and gaining strength in the right direction. In such a state they must be willing to live,—a state of watchfulness, progress, and of perpetual endeavor to be conformed to God. They must not think that degrees of sanctification follow inevitably from one first act of faith without intermediate efforts; for such a theory is a fruitful source of presumption. They must account that when they are “called,” and “justified,” they are “sanctified” in the same sense in which they are “glorified;” “for whom He called—them He also glorified;”—that is something yet to be obtained, though in a sense already conferred; so with being “sanctified.” They must never think to arrive at a state in this world in which they cannot use every petition in the Lord’s Prayer, daily, saying “Forgive us our trespasses,” so long as they say “Give us this day our daily bread.” They must live in a state of justification continually; for as the blood must this moment pass through the lungs and be oxygenated, as it did when we drew our first breath, so faith in Christ must be continuous, its first act not sufficing for the present hour, though by the arrange-

ment of grace there was connected with it a promise that it will be performed "until the day of Jesus Christ." Instead of murmuring that they are under obligations to be perfect, while they cannot be so in this world, they should esteem it, as before remarked, an infinite honor to have it said to them, "Be ye holy, for I am holy;" and, "Be ye, therefore, perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect." What lower standard would they desire should be proposed to them? Shall the law of God come down to every man's several ability? If our inability be culpable (which is proved by our being able to love every thing but God), it is right for God to command that which sin may disable us to do.

"He that overcometh shall inherit all things;" — but we have not "overcome" till the end, and when we are dying, however near to God we may have lived, there will be a necessity for overcoming faith to resist temptation. In proportion to successful efforts in conquering self and sin, and in being conformed to God, will be his love and approbation. Here is the field for discipline, growth, attainment; here we 'lay up in store a good foundation against the time to come,' and 'lay hold on eternal life;' here we determine the degrees of our likeness to Christ and of our future reward; while we come to a common level when the question is, How shall man be just with God? Dr. Watts well expresses this idea :

*“ Among thy saints will I appear
With hands well washed in innocence ;
But when I stand before thy bar
The blood of Christ is my defence.”*

There is no such thing as “Second Conversion,” if the word be used as synonymous with Regeneration. We cannot be twice spiritually “born again,” any more than we can twice have natural birth. But some Christians do experience, from time to time, marked elevations in their Christian character and life ; they seem to reach higher levels, and they proceed upon them with joy. In this sense they may experience ‘quickenings’ through life, rising to higher measures of love and obedience. We may all experience this, according as Christ dwells in us and we in Him. But one evidence of it will be that we discover more and more our sinfulness and unworthiness ; for if there is one concurrent testimony of Christian experience in the church of all ages, it is this, that progress in holiness is marked by a more profound sense of our lost and ruined state, and by the renunciation of our own state or works as the ground of acceptance with God. And when we speak of rising to a higher state in the Christian life, we are not to delude ourselves with the idea that we have got into a new zone, where temptation cannot come, and where imperfections and frailties will be less ; we properly mean by it that, by the help of Christ, we are, for the time, more susceptible to spiritual motives, that earthly things disturb us less ; but we are sadly

blinded if we do not perceive that, even then, we need the justifying righteousness of Christ as truly as we did when we were dead in trespasses and sins.

Paul never appears before us with expressions of satisfaction at his Christian attainments; the idea does violence to all our associations with his character. Job asserts his innocence of certain imputations; David exults in being vindicated from unjust charges; but the thought of pretending to a sinless state on the part of any good man in the Old or New Testament is not encouraged by any thing in their words or actions. President Edwards says, "I call that a profession of godliness which is a profession of the good things in which godliness consists, and not a profession of our good estate."

It would be strange indeed if, while the works of man are all of them stamped with imperfection, he could himself be perfect in his conformity to God. He cannot even draw a straight line, nor walk far upon one; how shall he keep that law which reaches even to "the thoughts and intents of the heart"?

XVI.

THE INTERMEDIATE STATE.

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MANY appearances certainly favor the idea that the soul does not exist separate from the body. This is materialism. The operations of the human mind are now observed only in connection with a human body, and it is easy to argue that they exist only in connection with the body. We see one faculty after another disappear in consequence of injury to the brain. In a swoon, or trance, there is apparently a total suspension of mental exercises. The inference of some is that the soul cannot exist without the body, and therefore that the soul is indeed only the brain itself in an active state.

Dr. Priestly and others say that sensation and thought are properties of the brain, and the brain being stimulated, thought is an inherent function, as much so as the circulation of the blood.

But we are continually admonished that the intimate connection and dependence between two things do not prove the two things to be the same. It is well said that one who had heard a violin but had never seen the player, perceiving that when the instrument is broken,

or when the strings are gone, there is no music, might infer that the violin alone made the music. But the intelligent hand which played upon those strings continues, independently of the violin, although, in making the music, it depended upon the instrument.

It is certain that in this world the manifested action of the mind depends upon the brain. All that we contend for is, that thought is not the same thing with matter, that the soul is immaterial, and that its existence does not depend upon its union with matter.

Materialists say that if the soul be separate from matter, and independent, we might expect that it would fully assert this before death; that in sleep or in a swoon it would give rational, coherent signs of its being able to act independently of the state of the body. They say, moreover, that if the soul be immaterial and cannot be destroyed, this must be true of all its faculties; whereas one and another faculty, as we often observe, may perish, while others remain unimpaired.

Dr. Priestly, and those of his school, maintain that there is no separate state of the soul; that the body is the seat of all perception and action; and that the resurrection is merely the starting up of the powers of body and mind after an interval of inaction.

Dr. Priestly held that these three doctrines were inseparable, namely, Materialism, Socinianism, and Philosophical Necessity (or a literal mechanism in the human will, as opposed to freedom of the will, or its government through motives). Socinianism was the source of his

other theories. Socinianism is the denial of any thing supernatural in Christ, and Dr. P.'s materialism was intended to justify such denial; for if materialism could be proved, of course it would establish Socinianism, that is, it would destroy the doctrine of the Saviour's Deity. Spirit and matter, having no property in common, cannot coexist. Dr. P. allows that God is a Spirit, but he asserts that man is only organized, thinking matter, with no separate soul, it being impossible for spirit to be conjoined with matter; hence, of course, Christ has not two natures. His human mind, even, was only his brain in a state of excitation.

He does not tell us how the Infinite Spirit could act on matter in creation, and in the organization of things, nor explain why spirit cannot reside in matter and act by it, as well as act upon it.

Moreover, if spirit and matter have no properties in common, and therefore cannot exist in connection one with another, nor act one upon the other, he does not tell us how God could create all things out of nothing; for, what properties have spirit and nothing in common with each other?

Dr. Samuel Clarke's argument against Mr. Dodwell is regarded by many as an able confutation of materialism. It is a doctrine of materialism that matter can be organized so as to think.

Says Dr. Clarke, for substance, If matter can think, if the power of consciousness be inherent in it, thought and consciousness must belong to its parts. For illus-

tration of his meaning we may say, Here is a piece of bread. It has certain properties which are inherent. We break the bread into two, or twenty, pieces. Each piece is as really bread as before it was broken, and therefore each piece has all the inherent properties of the whole.

Now we take the human brain. If thinking be an inherent property of the brain as a whole, if thought is essential to matter existing as human brain, why should not parts and particles of the brain possess and exhibit all the properties of the whole, as in the case of the bread? Then all its parts must be composed of innumerable consciousnesses. That being so, the union of its parts cannot make one individual consciousness. There must be as many consciousnesses as there are particles of matter in the brain. Their being arranged into one organism cannot destroy the original properties of the particles, for no foreign qualifying power comes in among them, and therefore if matter can think, its particles must think, and there can be no individuality in thought.

He argues from this that the soul, whose power of thinking is undeniably one individual consciousness, is not matter. — Perhaps the argument is not unworthy of the objection, and that it is all which the objection deserves.

Mr. Farmer, of great repute in the theological world for his writings on subjects kindred to the one before us, derives a strong argument for the immateriality and

separate existence of the soul from the "General Prevalence of the Worship of Human Spirits," — the title of one of his works. He says in the Introduction, that if human spirits were worshipped in the days of Moses, the word *death* could not then have denoted more than the cessation of bodily life, for if *death* had implied the extinction or insensibility of the soul, the dead would not have been worshipped as gods. And if Moses knew that the soul became insensible at death, or that it had no independent existence, he could most unanswerably have opposed the practice of spirit worship; but we never find him resorting to this mode of refutation. So far from adopting this theory of the materiality of the soul, he expressly tells us that after the body of Adam was created, he did not become a living soul till God had breathed into him the breath of life. This language is not used in connection with the brutes, showing that something was imparted to man by the Creator besides a bodily organization. This is important in connection with the subject of the annihilation of the wicked, — to which reference will be made in the next Lecture.

Without discussing the question whether the people of God were ignorant of the doctrine of immortality for four thousand years, it is beyond a doubt that life and immortality are set in the clearest light by Christ in the Gospel. It is a relief to escape from speculations, to the infallible source of truth. The world at large does not appreciate nor even understand these philosophical dis-

putations; the Bible has none of them; it settles every thing without explanation, leaving us to exercise our ingenuity as we please in philosophical speculations.

To begin with passages of Scripture which come first to mind, we hear the Saviour on the cross say, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." In his case, surely, there was something besides a material substance, something more than the thinking head, something which was to exist and to be cared for separate from the brain which was fast becoming insensible.

"And I say unto you, my friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the body and after that have no more that they can do; but I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: fear him which after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell, yea, I say unto you, Fear him."

The separation of the soul from the body, and its distinct existence, appear in these words: "And it came to pass that the beggar died, and was carried by angels into Abraham's bosom; the rich man also, died and was buried; and in hell he lifted up his eyes being in torments." Grant, for argument's sake, that this is only a parable;—in which of the other parables is any thing supposed, or employed as machinery of the story, which is not literally true? Not one.

"Handle me and see," says Christ to his disciples after his resurrection; "for a spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see me have."

"Lord Jesus, receive my spirit."

“The Sadducees say that there is neither angel nor spirit, but the Pharisees confess both.” Paul at Jerusalem used this to turn the popular feeling in his favor.

“Knowing that while we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord.” “We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.”

“I knew a man in Christ—whether in the body or out of the body, I cannot tell; God knoweth.”

“Having a desire to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better.”

“The spirits in prison—which some time were disobedient—in the days of Noah.”

“And to the spirits of just men made perfect.”

“I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God.” “The souls *of them* ;”—this is a hard saying for the materialists.

“Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord from henceforth; yea, saith the spirit, that they may rest from their labors, and their works do follow them.”

Such passages leave nothing to be said, nor to be desired, in the way of proof, by those who receive the Bible as the Word of God. Allowing the Bible to be only the excellent production of uninspired men, we see in these passages the constant and natural assumption of the truth that the soul may be separated from the body, that it is not dependent upon it for its existence, and that it survives the body. As to difficulties and objections, Paul’s course of reasoning with regard to the

difficulties attending the doctrine of the resurrection of the body, will apply here. It need not be quoted.

But how does it follow from this that the soul is to exist forever?

However strong and conclusive we may deem the common argument in favor of immortality, drawn from the analogy of nature, from the desires of the soul, its dread of annihilation, and from the affections which God has implanted in us, — which would be a reckless waste if we were to perish, life with its toils and aspirations being a mockery if we exist only for a few years, we must acknowledge that it is only by the light of Revelation that we arrive at certainty on this subject. “I give unto them eternal life,” says the Saviour, “and they shall never perish.” “To them who by patient continuance in well doing, seek for glory, honor, and immortality, eternal life.” “For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.” But to multiply such quotations were needless.

The immortality of the soul may be said to have been, with scarcely an exception, the belief of every people on earth, though mixed in many cases with theories of transmigration. The knowledge of the one only living and true God, in some cases, perishes; but the belief in existence after death remains. Socrates has been made by some to contradict this position. This has been ably answered. As to the opinion of Socrates himself, we read that, in his last hours, though

doubts mingled with his hopes, he said, "I derive confidence from the hope that something of man remains after death." "Is it not strange, after all that I have said to convince you that I am going to the society of the happy, that Crito still thinks this body, which will soon be a lifeless corpse, to be Socrates? Let him dispose of my body as he pleases, but let him not, at its interment, mourn over it as if it were Socrates."

Massillon puts the argument of existence after death in an interesting light; his words may be quoted here simply for this reason, and not because Scripture needs confirmation. He says,

"If we have nothing to expect after this life, why are we not happy? Whence comes it that riches serve only to make man uneasy, honors fatigue him, pleasures exhaust him, sciences confound his curiosity; how is it that all these cannot fill the immensity of his heart, and that they still leave him something to wish for? All other beings are contented in their lot, appear happy in the situation in which the Author of nature has placed them." The animals, insects, and birds, he says, are happy when their natural wants are supplied. "Man alone is uneasy and discontented, a prey to his desires; he allows himself to be torn by fears, he finds his punishment in his hopes, and becomes gloomy and unhappy in the midst even of his pleasures. Man alone can meet nothing here to fix his heart."¹

¹ Vol. I. 227.

We come now to the question, What is the state of the soul after death, previous to the Resurrection?

Three theories have been proposed, and they now have their respective adherents.

One theory is, The soul is insensible between death and the resurrection.

Another is, The souls of men go neither to heaven nor to hell immediately after death, but remain happy or miserable, till the resurrection, in two departments of a region commonly called *Hades*.

The third theory is expressed in the language of the Westminster Assembly's Shorter Catechism: "The souls of believers are at their death made perfect in holiness and do immediately pass into glory, their bodies, being still united to Christ, do rest in their graves until the resurrection."

The first theory which we will consider, is that of *Insensibility between death and the resurrection*.

This doctrine has been revived of late years, and it prevails to a considerable extent. It has found an advocate in Archbishop Whately, of Dublin, in his work, "A View of the Scripture Revelations concerning a Future State." He thinks, indeed, that the Scriptures have left the question undecided; but his own mind is strongly inclined to the theory of insensibility. It is a disagreeable necessity to examine this theory; for the reader, who is not already familiar with it, will shudder and be in distress till he has passed through this dismal region of silence.

Dr. Whately says, "It is common to hear persons, when speaking of those of the departed of whose final salvation they are confident, speak of them as in heaven, as admitted to that blessed state in which they are to continue forever, as made partakers of the kingdom of heaven. And yet you are expressly told in Scripture that it is at the end of the world that Jesus will come to judge all men and pronounce their final doom, and that each will then have his just portion assigned him, whether of reward or punishment."

His principal arguments are as follows :

'Death is commonly designated in the Bible by the terms sleep, and asleep.'

'The Apostles comfort Christians by thoughts of the Resurrection, and not of their friends being in heaven.'

'The warnings addressed to unbelievers refer to the last day, and not to the intermediate state.'

'Proofs of immortality are drawn from the resurrection, not from the intermediate state.'

'The day of judgment, and not the day of death, is declared to be the time when the condition of all men is to be unalterably fixed.'

His theory is that the first thing which we know after death is, that the judgment day has come, that it will be with the soul as in the case of a fainting fit, when we do not perceive that there is any interval between the accident and the restoration of consciousness. He speaks of a woman who fell into a trance

state for several weeks, and revived asking for grapes, which had been brought in just before she became insensible. We are all familiar with cases of this description. Hence, he says, there is no long, dreary interval perceived by the soul, and of course no sense of weariness, nor of delay or loss of enjoyment.

If one were disposed to combat the opinions of this writer, instead of wishing simply to know the truth, it might be easy to allege that the Archbishop's position in Ireland, surrounded by Roman Catholic influences, made it easy for him to fall into this theory as a short method of disproving the doctrines of purgatory and the adoration of saints.

While from our great respect for him we must be specially careful not to give undue weight to this explanation, we are, nevertheless, forced to receive his own candid admissions as to the desirableness of his theory in contending with Papal errors. For he tells us that if the Scriptures were clear on the subject of an intermediate state, a perfect knowledge that departed souls are conscious, would lead us to offer up prayers for the dead. This, however, he says, could not be the case, if the Scriptures represented the separate state as unchangeable. If one says that such prayers are at least harmless, Dr. Whately answers that they are not without a bad effect upon men while they live, who are encouraged to sin with the expectation of being prayed for after death. Moreover, he says that we should be

tempted to pray to departed saints, who are with God, and who, we might not be able to disbelieve, must have power with God. Such things, he tells us, are the melancholy fruit of believing in a state of consciousness after death previously to the resurrection. Adopt the theory of unconsciousness, and it shuts out this error.

In attempting a reply to these various considerations in favor of his theory, we may begin with the one just mentioned, and say, that to believe in the sleep of souls between death and the resurrection for the purpose of refuting the Popish doctrines of Purgatory and praying to saints, is paying too dear even for so conclusive an argument. On the same principle we might be asked to forego the Lord's Supper, and to admit that it was intended only for the times of the Apostles; because we should by this means help to do away with the Romish abuses of this Sacrament. It is difficult to conceive how such a man as Archbishop Whately could bring himself to offer this supposed advantage as having the least weight with those who take the Scriptures for their infallible guide; because the same inducement could be offered in connection with every truth which has been perverted by the cunning craftiness of men. We will yield our faith in the immediate happiness of departed saints, if the Bible does not warrant this precious faith so generally embraced; but we cannot turn to the right hand nor to the left from the instructions of the Word of God to

save the souls of the whole Papal world, nor to confute their heresy. Had such concessions never been made, for similar purposes, there had been no Papacy. And if, in case of equilibrium in the argument, we must choose between a theory which, it is said, will refute the monstrous error of Purgatory, and, on the other hand, a theory which represents the souls of the pious dead as being still conscious, we are disposed to think that the cause of truth and, consequently, of human salvation, would lose most by the theory which eclipses heaven and the souls of all the pious dead to the eye of faith. We can hardly reason with composure against this theory; we feel toward it very much as we might toward a serious proposition that the graves of all our dead should be given up to the colleges of surgeons. Such a proposition might proceed from distinguished sources, be maintained with learning, and be argued logically; but in replying to it, learning and logic would yield to expressions of horror, and to the outcries of natural affection. We are glad that Archbishop Whately feels constrained to admit that the Scriptures do by no means decide in favor of his theory. He candidly says (and our hearts thank him for it as they do one who has forborne to rob us), that if the theory be true it is well that the Scriptures are no more explicit; for many would be weary and discouraged by the thought that the pious dead are literally asleep. Though one moment and ten centuries are the same to them that sleep, yet people could not so regard it.

He says that the Scriptures leave the subject so far undecided that those whose feelings are biased either way may innocently adopt either theory. — We would none of us be behind him in charity, but we wonder at any men who with the New Testament in their hands, and even in the midst of Popery, can adopt such a belief.

As to the well-known habit of the Apostles, in speaking of future blessedness, to dwell upon the resurrection and that which was to follow, more than upon the happiness of an intermediate state, we may see in this an illustration of their farsighted and comprehensive faith. Their happiness would not be complete till “the adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body,” granting that, as they say, this refers only to the resurrection. The glories of that day and the bliss of having a completed nature, body and soul, outshone the intervening blessedness of heaven; they believed in both, but they speak chiefly of the greater, and of the more distant consummation. This was their habit of mind. It is the effect of powerful faith. So with regard to the wicked, — the Apostles, for the same reason, dwell chiefly on the consummation of their woe at the end of the world. It should be borne in mind that in the Apostles’ day the thoughts of believers were full of the Resurrection. We, probably, do not fully consider how their minds were occupied with it. Christ had just risen from the dead and had become the first fruits of them that slept. Christianity and the hopes of its

friends were all suspended on the question whether Christ would rise from the dead. He rose, and such a triumph never was known, and never can be known in this world. "Resurrection," therefore, became the engrossing theme, — the resurrection of Christ, and so the resurrection of his people. It is not strange, we maintain, that in writing and speaking about a future life, the souls of the Apostles should have leaped beyond the intermediate state, and should be found dwelling rapturously on the resurrection. It seemed deficient to tell believers that their departed friends were with Jesus, because the stronger and more exultant language was, — "them that sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him." "Who shall change our vile body that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body." Paul says of himself — that he counts "all things but loss — if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead." But he needed to make no effort merely to rise from the dead; — his meaning is that he strives to make good his interest in Christ so that he might have a completed glorified nature; — not merely reach heaven, but have a body at last like Christ's. So in warning the wicked, who rejected his Lord, it was natural to remind them not merely of their punishment, but of the certain coming of their injured Saviour whom Paul preached, — of his coming "with his mighty angels in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God." It is easy to see how intermediate things dwindled before a mind raised to such heights of expect-

tation. So when Christ had ascended, the "two men in white apparel" spake of his *coming again*, not of his being in heaven. Was he not therefore in heaven? We may cheerfully admit, in view of what has now been said, that Paul and Peter dwell but little on the happiness of the intermediate state compared with their glowing anticipations of their Redeemer's final triumph and of our "gathering together unto him."

This will help us to a reply when Archbishop Whately says that it is an argument for the resurrection, not for a separate state, which is based on the words to Moses at the bush, — "I am the God of Abraham." — But the argument of Christ seems to contemplate *the opposite of annihilation*, a future, or continued, state of existence, not merely the resurrection. Resurrection is made use of as the exponent, the impressive symbol, of a perpetuated existence, which the death of the body seemingly interrupts; and therefore 'resurrection' is the appropriate restorative, adding the link which had apparently been broken by death. The argument of Christ may be stated thus: *Now that there is a state of existence hereafter*, even Moses showed at the bush when he called God the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob. God would not have suffered himself to be called "the God" of those who had ceased forever to exist. — This grouping of future life in all its stages, and using resurrection as its title, its appellative, is copied by the Apostles, in grouping rewards and punishments, death, the last day, resurrection and final judgment, without drawing lines

of distinction between them, and making "resurrection" to stand for the whole.

An illustration of this, already mentioned, is given in the brief narrative of the Saviour's ascension. "Why stand ye gazing up into heaven?" said the "two men in white apparel;" -- "this same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." But why not dwell on the intermediate period of his exaltation and reign? why pass this by and speak of his second coming? And does this prove that Christ had no consciousness between his ascension and second coming? Evidently, the second coming of Christ was seized upon as suited to strike the minds of the disciples more powerfully than the bare assurance that Christ still lived and reigned. That was implied by the assurance of his second coming, so that this, and resurrection, are like the first-person singular among a group of nouns, governing the syntax.

In depicting the terrors of a public execution, one would not be likely to dwell much upon the previous imprisonment; though in itself it were sufficient to absorb the thoughts. It would be the great catastrophe, the irrevocable act of execution, which must seize and occupy his mind. Apply this to the punishment of the wicked.

In offering some further positive proofs from Scripture (in addition to those cited to disprove materialism), showing that the soul after death is not asleep but conscious, we may appropriately begin with a case which we must allow is the strongest on the side of Dr. Whately,

and seemingly favoring his argument drawn from the use of the terms sleep, and asleep, applied to death; but which we think will be found to be against his theory. Stephen said, "Behold I see heaven opened, and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God." "And they stoned Stephen, calling [upon God] and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. And when he had said this, he fell asleep."

Here it is interesting to notice that Stephen sees Jesus "standing" at the right hand of God, as though the Saviour's intense interest in the dying martyr led Him to stand looking on, in an attitude of waiting to welcome Him to himself. But let us hasten to the close of the impressive scene. "And having said this, he fell asleep," that is, according to Archbishop Whately's theory of "unconsciousness," he fell into a slumber, yet undisturbed, and continuing till the end of time! But what are the words of the narrative? "And having said this, he fell asleep." What had he said? "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." We are not willing to believe that Stephen meant "at the last day;" nor that he was mistaken in his expectation that Christ was waiting to receive him that moment into glory. As to the use of the word "sleep" here, it is a beautiful touch by the inspired pen. The shower of stones is descending upon the martyr, and yet his peaceful death is merely a falling asleep.

The use of this term as applied to death, is sufficiently explained when we remember that the Bible describes external things as they appear, not as they are. It is by

this means that divine wisdom has made the Bible consistent, from age to age, with scientific disclosures. It does not conflict with the modern theory of astronomy, and for the reason that it uses the popular phraseology with regard to the rising and setting of the heavenly bodies. It does not conflict with geology, for similar reasons; and the close resemblance of the dead body to one asleep warrants the use of the term on the same principle. Dr. Campbell, in one of his well-known Dissertations, relieves this difficulty, and others with it, by showing that the term *sleep*, applied to the state of the dead, is found in all languages, whatever be the popular belief as to the condition of the dead. "The common doctrine of the Orientals," he says, "favored the separate existence of the souls of the deceased." "Christians have been the more ready to adopt such expressions, as their doctrine of the resurrection presented to their minds an additional analogy between the bodies of the deceased and the bodies of those asleep—that of being one day awakened."

The words of Christ to the penitent thief make the very general impression that ere the sun went down the soul of the thief would be in the conscious enjoyment of Paradise. To this Archbishop Whately replies, "one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day;" but this cannot mean that one day and a thousand years are identical; that men regard them as such, or that God would promise a thing "this day" which was not to occur for a thousand years. The meaning we take to be, The lapse of time makes no difference

with God as to his plans and actions. A thousand years do not make him forgetful ; the events of one day are not more easily comprehended than those of ages ; his promises and threatenings are sure, though delayed a thousand years.

Perhaps those who believe that the soul is conscious after death, wonder that, in view of the account of the rich man and Lazarus, any one can believe the opposite. Archbishop Whately disposes of the testimony from that passage by saying that the only object is to show that the conditions of men, hereafter, are not necessarily parallel with their conditions here. All else in the passage, he says, is mere costume, and is not to be received as intentionally correct statement.

This is a dangerous principle of interpretation. The assumption is easily disproved. For, to resume the statement already made on this point, in no one parable of Christ is any thing introduced by way of machinery or costume, which is at all fictitious. Let every parable be examined, and we shall be interested to find that this is literally so. Take the parable of the Good Samaritan for an example. Every thing there narrated has happened. So of the Prodigal Son, the wheat and tares, the net, the treasure hid in a field, the lost sheep, and the lost piece of money. Every thing in these parables happens continually. There is not one touch of fictitious illustration in the whole. We have no right to say that the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, allowing it to be a "parable," is an

exception. The importance of this will be recognized in its connection with the doctrine of retribution after death. The natural impression which the narrative makes upon the reader is, that the soul survives the death of the body, and does not sleep between death and the resurrection.

The language of Paul respecting his own death seems utterly inconsistent with the idea of his death being a sleep. "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." Such a man never could have preferred ages of unconsciousness and inactivity to laboring for Christ. What prospect did death hold out to him? Surely not that he was to sleep until the resurrection. "Having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better." Will any one explain how death is a 'departure to be with Christ,' if the soul at death becomes unconscious? — "For we know that if this earthly house of our tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." What is it to be "unclothed," and "clothed upon," if the soul be not separated from the body by death?

One cannot help thinking what seeming delusions have been practised on dying Christians in all ages of the world, and upon their surviving friends, if the anticipations of the dying, that they would at once be with Christ, are not fulfilled. Open almost any Christian biography, and where do you find a dying saint anticipating non-existence during the interval of death and the resurrection? Nowhere, but on the contrary —

"The world recedes, it disappears;
 Heaven opens on my eyes; my ears
 With sounds seraphic ring.
 Lend, lend your wings, I mount, I fly,
 O grave! where is thy victory!
 O death! where is thy sting!"

Here, for example, is a passage from David Brainerd's last days — "Lord's Day, September 27, 1747. I was born on a Sabbath day, and I have reason to think I was new born on a Sabbath day, and I hope I shall die on this Sabbath day. — I am almost in eternity; I long to be there. — I long to be in heaven, praising and glorifying God with the holy angels." — "October 6th, he lay as if he were dying. He was heard to utter, in broken whispers, such expressions as these: 'He will come, he will not tarry; I shall soon be in glory. I shall soon glorify God with the angels.'" But Archbishop Whately thinks that for a hundred and thirteen years Brainerd has been utterly unconscious, and that all these anticipations are not to be fulfilled for perhaps several thousand years. All such books as, *The Memoirs of Dr. Payson*, and the "*Last Hours of the Dying*" should be suppressed, if heaven does not receive the departing spirit. Yea, many of us are found false witnesses before God, if this be so. Alas! too, for our Christian Hymns:

"Give me the wings of faith to rise
 Within the veil, and see
 The saints above, how great their joys,
 How bright their glories be.

“Take comfort, Christians, when your friends
 In Jesus fall asleep;
 Their better being never dies;
 Then why dejected weep?”

“Think, O ye who fondly languish
 O'er the graves of those you love,
 While your bosoms swell with anguish,
 They are warbling songs above.

“While our silent steps are straying
 Lonely through night's deep'ning shade,
 Glory's brightest beams are playing
 Round the happy Christian's head.”

“Hark! they whisper! angels say
 ‘Sister spirit! come away!’”

But no, Archbishop Whately would say, rather, Sister spirit, fall asleep!

Not only are Christians, drawing near to death, often filled with glowing anticipations of heaven, but in health there are times when every child of God has such anticipations of the heavenly world, and such conceptions of what it must be to dwell there, that death and the grave are disarmed of terror. All these things are in palpable contradiction of the theory of unconsciousness after death. But Dr. Whately says it will be the same as though we did awake in heaven, for the long sleep will be without any perception of delay and natural tediousness. We demur to this. We shall

lose inconceivable good. We had hoped in heaven to behold the growing empire of our King on earth; to see Satan foiled; to share in the triumphs of the Gospel when China receives Christ as her king, and Japan comes into the family of Jesus, and India begins to shine the brightest jewel in his crown. But though life on earth may have been spent to promote these things, and all our desires were lost in this, 'Thy kingdom come,' it seems that we are to be put to sleep, like infants, while the household is to be alive with joy. Are we not the bride of Christ? But while our husband and lord is making preparations for the nuptials, we, it appears, are to be kept unconscious till every thing is ready for the ceremony. We feel a righteous indignation at all such intimations. They cheat us of the expectation created by Him who said, "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself." The dying day is "the day of Christ" to a believer, as may be seen in several places in the Epistles. It is at death, we believe, that Christ comes to receive us to himself. Moreover, we think of death, to a Christian, as rest and peace; but Dr. Whately tells us that the next moment after we fall asleep, we shall hear the voice of the archangel; the dead will be rising, the Judge will be descending, the heavens will be departing, the earth will be on fire, all kindreds of the earth will be wailing at the sight of the Judge, and, apparently sooner than our bodies could be placed in their coffins, we shall put on

new forms, and be among the splendors and ecstatic visions of the second coming of Christ. Is this in accordance with the representations of the Bible concerning the rest and peace of death? Where is Archbishop Whately's "sleep," if this be so?

The inconsistency, or superfluousness, of two trials and adjudications of the dead, which Archbishop Whately dwells upon so much as an argument against the intermediate state, does not strike all as it appears to have affected him; yet it is a consideration which, apart from the subject in hand, is a perplexity in many minds.

Is there not both a propriety and a seeming necessity for two adjudications, in the case of every soul? One is necessary at death, if the soul survives the body, in order that it may receive its award. But still its full account is not then made up, and cannot be till time shall be no longer. Voltaire and Paine will have a greater account to be settled at the last day than when they died; Paul will not be prepared for his full award till there are no longer any to read his epistles. So of every one who exerted any influence, as who does not? Moreover, the assignment of each soul at death to its place of happiness or woe, is a more private and personal transaction; in the great day the character and doings of the Most High will be vindicated before all, in the history of each. Hence, so far from its being unnatural that there should be two judgment days for each soul, we think there is a propriety and, indeed, a

necessity for them. Hence it does not constitute an argument against the intermediate state.

Have not the fallen angels already had that which is equivalent to a trial and condemnation? We cannot suppose that they were 'thrust down to hell' without something of the kind, or that they would be detained so long merely as prisoners waiting for their trial. They are convicts already, and yet they are 'reserved — unto the judgment of the great day.' Their account, certainly, will not be ready for its full adjustment till the end of this world.

But, to conclude this part of the subject, — We have no analogies to encourage a belief in this long sleep. The phenomena of sleep are all deficient, for this reason among others, — that the bodily organization of one asleep does not become decomposed. Could we see a body decay or change greatly, at night, and then revive in the morning with all the powers of the mind in full exercise as now is the case on waking from slumber, we should be presented with an analogy to Dr. Whately's theory of unconsciousness in the grave. Because the mind recovers itself from sleep while here in the body, one has no right to infer that it can remain unconscious for ages while the body is wholly decayed, and still return to consciousness. This argument is not against the possibility of the theory as an act of divine power, — for it is as possible as the resurrection of the dead. The point is this: It is illogical to argue that when the body has decayed in the grave, the soul can awake

from a sleep of ages, for the reason that the mind here awakes from sleep; for here the body survives. The two things, therefore, are not parallel.

Moreover, Where does the soul sleep, when the body is mixed with the dust of the earth? It is not in heaven; it is not in the grave, for it is not a material substance; and the body which cradled its slumbers in this world, is, perhaps, burned to ashes. This body, we know, will, by the power of God, be raised; the soul can be re-created; but what intelligent conception has any one of its existence, when the body, which is essential in this world even to its being asleep, is no more? Lodged, perhaps, it may be, in that mysterious germ of the new body which passes undestroyed through earth, and fire, and water; we do not deny it; we only say that our present power to sleep and awake affords no ground for an argument in favor of a thing which, in some of its conditions, is totally unlike that phenomenon.

Thus far, with regard to the theory that the soul sleeps between death and the resurrection.

The reader must be willing to suffer awhile longer. He must now pass into the swamps which lie around purgatory, the dismal regions of ghosts, far this side of the heavenly Jerusalem;—to which, however, in opposition to this next theory, Paul tells us,—not that we are coming, but, “Ye are come.”

THE SECOND THEORY, then, is, That souls at death go neither to heaven nor to hell immediately, but remain

in a region called HADES. We call this, for convenience, *The Hades theory*.

The theory is, that there is, somewhere, a place which is divided into two regions, one for the righteous, the other for the wicked. It is called by some modern writers, a "subterranean" region. They say the upper part is occupied by the good, while the lower part is an abysmal place where the wicked are confined in misery. The upper region is called *Paradise*, the lower *Tartarus*. Wicked angels are said to be there, awaiting their final doom, and their eternal prison-house. At the resurrection, the souls of the good will ascend where God has his seat, and the wicked will be removed to another place of punishment.

HADES, from the Greek, *a* (with an aspirate) having the force of a negative, — and *eido*, to see, — hence, INVISIBILITY, is used eleven times in the New Testament, and is translated *hell* in every place but one, where it is rendered by the word, *grave*. The old English, or Saxon word, *Hell*, means, *a place obscured, covered, hidden*. Dr. Doddridge refers to that meaning of the word as retained in his day "in the eastern, and especially in the western counties of England," where "to *hele* over a thing" is, "to cover it."¹ He says, moreover, that the old meaning of the word exactly answers to the Greek word *Hades*, and denotes a "concealed or unseen place."² Dr. Campbell says, "But though our word, *hell*, in its original signification, was

¹ Fam. Expos., Rev. I. 18. b.

² Ibid.

more adapted to express the sense of Hades [covered, obscure] than of Gehenna [valley of Hinnom, a place of torment] it is not so now. When we speak as Christians, we always express by it the place of the punishment of the wicked after the general judgment, as opposed to heaven, the place of the reward of the righteous.”¹ In a word, the meaning of *Hades* (translated *Hell* in the New Testament, as *Gehenna* also is) means *the state of separation from the body*, irrespective of character. Jacob says, “I shall go down into *Sheol* [Greek, *Hades*] unto my son mourning,” that is, I shall *leave the world*, or, *go into the world of spirits*, I shall end my days, mourning.

The ablest expounder of this theory (of Hades as a place), perhaps, is Bishop Horsley. He builds his belief of it chiefly on 1 Peter iii. 19, “by which also he (Christ) went and preached to the spirits in prison.” This is the “hell” (“*Hades*”) mentioned in the Apostles’ “creed” — “he descended into hell.” Bishop Horsley is much concerned to explain how the souls of the righteous in Hades can be properly called “spirits in prison;” — for it was to the good that he believes Christ went to preach during the interval of his death and resurrection. He says that the invisible mansion of departed spirits, though certainly not a place of confinement to the good, is, nevertheless, in some respects, “a prison,” a place of seclusion, a place of unfinished happiness, of rest, of security, of hope, rather than of enjoyment. It would not have been

¹ Prelim. Diss. VI. part 2.

necessary, were it not for sin. The deliverance of the righteous from this place and state is to be effected by Christ. A place of confinement like this, to the good, may well be called "a prison." He would translate the passage in Peter, 'He went and preached to the spirits in safe-keeping.' "Now if Christ went and preached to the spirits in prison, he went to their prison, and what is this but the 'hell' of the Apostles' Creed? I have not met with the critic who could explain." He gives to the Apostles' Creed an authority which would control our interpretations; but it is by no means probable that the Apostles ever saw the creed which bears their name. No writer before the fifth century speaks of the Apostles as having met to form a creed. Luke certainly makes no record of such a meeting. Had it originated with the Apostles, it would have been the same in all times, not changed, as has been the case, by different early hands. The same writer gives the creed of the Church in different terms, which he would not do had there been one authentic Apostles' Creed. In its present form, it is, indeed, very ancient, being recorded by Ambrose in the third century. That it has no binding authority at the present day is seen from its caption in the Episcopal Prayer-Book: "— Any churches may omit the words, *He descended into hell*, or may instead of them use the words, *He went into the place of departed spirits*, which are considered as words of the same meaning in the creed." We can make no objection to this, provided "the place of departed spirits" means, merely, *a state of*

separation from the body;— and this is obviously a proper meaning of Hades. But there are those who seem, with Bishop Horsley, to feel that Hades is a *place*. We have seen how Bishop Horsley labors painfully under his great mistake that “spirits in prison” means, “souls in safe-keeping,” who were the objects of a gracious visit in their “prison,” (not heaven), from their Redeemer within the thirty-six hours between his death and resurrection. Neither the Bible, nor the conceptions of Christian faith and hope, warrant the belief that an ante-chamber to heaven, or a provincial region away from the metropolis, detains the righteous dead, while heaven, and its angels, sit solitary, with, perhaps, the scanty satisfaction of possessing two redeemed souls, Enoch and Elijah, who providentially leaped the “prison” of Bishop Horsley. Moses, when he appeared on Tabor, we take it, must have gained a brief respite from that “prison,” to accompany Elijah on his visit to the Saviour at his transfiguration, after which he must have returned, alas! and is yet in “prison.” We believe no such thing. This is not the faith of the Church,— we mean “the Church which is His body.”

As an illustration of the way in which the simple, unsuspecting writers of the New Testament can be drawn to the support of almost any theory by quoting words from them apart from their connection, we may refer to these words in Acts: “For David is not ascended into the heavens.” This is a great proof-text with Romish writers, and with the advocates of Hades as a *place*.

They use it to show that righteous souls do not go immediately to heaven, but to an intermediate *place*. Hence they argue in favor of Purgatory. But the speaker's object is merely to show that David, in the Psalms, is speaking of the resurrection and exaltation of *Christ*, not of himself. "Ascended into the heavens," as the whole context shows, means, Exaltation, such as the words which follow the quotation describe: "For *David* is not ascended into the heavens; but he saith himself, The Lord said unto *my Lord*, sit thou on my right hand until I make thy foes thy footstool." The word *ascended* is not the emphatic word; but David and his Lord are contrasted, and *exaltation to the right hand of God*, not the state of the body, or soul, is the subject in hand.

As the passage in Peter makes the impression that the souls to whom they say Christ preached, were those of the wicked, Bishop Horsley would interpret the words, "went and preached to those who were formerly disobedient, but were now recovered." Another difficulty still more formidable lies in his path. These souls, it is said, "were sometime disobedient when once the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah." They were ante-diluvians, therefore, it would seem, to whom Christ preached; and are they not, many of them, victims of the deluge? "To this," Bishop Horsley says, "the only answer that can be given is, that the Scriptures are manifestly anxious to speak so as to convey a distinct intimation that the ante-diluvian race were not uninterested in redemption. Perhaps

the souls of those who died in the deluge have peculiar apprehensions of themselves as marked victims of divine vengeance, and might have peculiar need of consolation, which the preaching of our Lord in those subterranean regions afforded these prisoners of hope."

Here we perceive his belief in the doctrine of the final restoration of the wicked, of which he was an advocate.

A writer on this subject in this country (the author of "Lenten Fast"), dislikes the interpretation, and says, "Might not Christ have proclaimed to those, who, having died in penitence, had been thus waiting and watching for ages, that at length — He had finished the work of redemption, and was now going to plead as their Intercessor?"¹ He advocates the Hades theory with much earnestness. "The just," he says, "do not at once enter into heaven, nor do the lost descend immediately to their eternal prison."²

Dr. Bloomfield, commenting on the words of Christ to the Penitent Thief, says, "He could not mean a paradise of sensual delights. Nor must we suppose that by Paradise is meant heaven. The term came to denote, among the later Jews, that *pleasant abode* in Hades appointed for the reception of the pious dead until they should, after the day of judgment, be again united to their bodies in a future state." — It was "a secure and quiet retreat for the time which should intervene between death and the resurrection."

¹ "Lenten Fast," p. 198.

² *Ibid.* p. 175.

Dr. Dwight says,¹ "Several expressions, found in both Testaments, seem to intimate an *intermediate place*, as well as an *intermediate state of existence*, between this world and the final scenes of rétribution." "I am obliged to confess myself not altogether satisfied. I have found difficulties on both sides." "The soul of Christ was not left in Hades. The thief, therefore, went to the state which is denoted by this word, and not to that which is denoted by heaven, unless this word is supposed to include heaven." We suppose that it does include heaven, and also hell. "Paradise" is heaven, as will be made to appear. The rich man was in Hades as truly as Lazarus, that is, both were in a *state of separation from the body*. Christ says, "Thou wilt not leave my soul in Hades." He evidently means, "Thou wilt not suffer me to remain a disembodied soul"; which is confirmed by what is said of his body in the next clause—that it would not remain long enough in the grave for decay to commence its work upon it. But Dr. Dwight, and other good and able men, seem to be embarrassed with the idea so common in the early times, that Hades must be a place. The word "*leave*," seems to favor the idea of being left behind in some place. A good argument could be made for a far different interpretation than any which has yet been generally received. The Greek word for *leave*, is used by Christ on the cross, according to Matthew and Mark, and it is there rendered "*forsaken*."

¹ Theology, Sermon 144.

Hence, the passage in Acts, quoted from the Psalms might mean, When I am a separate spirit, thou wilt not forsake me; as though he said, ‘Yea though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, — thou art with me.’ — But the meaning evidently is, Thou wilt not suffer me to remain long separate from the body, — referring, of course, to immediate resurrection.

As the most convenient mode of considering and answering the arguments in favor of this theory, of Hades as a place, we will now attend to the more commonly received doctrine of the Intermediate State.

We come, therefore, to the THIRD THEORY, which is, *The doctrine of the Westminster Assembly’s Catechism.*

“Q. What benefits do believers receive from Christ at their death?”

“A. The souls of believers are at their death made perfect in holiness, and do immediately pass into glory; their bodies, being still united to Christ, do rest in their graves until the resurrection.”

Some of the direct proofs for this theory will first be considered, and then the arguments of those who maintain that there is an intermediate place for souls between death and their final abodes. Let it be borne in mind that we do not suppose the righteous or the wicked to be, respectively, as happy or as miserable as they will be after the resurrection. This we shall show hereafter.

In proof of the entrance of righteous souls at once into heaven, we may mention the evident identity, in

the account of Paul's visit to the invisible world, between "the third heaven" and "Paradise." "I knew a man in Christ—caught up to the third heaven." "And I knew such an one caught up into Paradise." Here, *Paradise*, and *the third heaven*, which all admit is the "heaven of heavens," are identical. — To break the force of this argument, some say that Paul is speaking of two revelations, one referring to heaven, and the other to a lower place. But, that one vision, or translation, is meant, is obvious from this, that we should have an inverted climax if two are intended: "I knew a man caught up to the third heaven, the very presence of God, yea, even to the place where the righteous are kept in seclusion." This is not admissible. — But if Paradise and "third heaven" are identical, the thief went with Christ to the heaven of heavens.

Stephen's vision, which we have already considered, was a vision of "heaven opened," "and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God." The vision was, no doubt, as truly for the strengthening of believers as of Stephen. The impression made by the vision is, that the souls of martyrs go at once to the right hand of God, not that they depart into a "place of seclusion."

"Having a desire," says Paul, "to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better." Where is Christ? We none of us doubt that he is in the heaven of heavens, and that this is his seat. If it be said that Christ could be with Paul in a *place* called Hades, we reply, Christ was with Paul in this world. He did not need "to

depart," in order to be, in this sense, with Christ. His words of 'desire' seem to intimate not merely that Christ would be with him, but that he should go where Christ resides, where He has his throne, "is set down," "at the right hand of the Majesty on high."

There is something incongruous in the thought of the Saviour's soul departing from the scenes of crucifixion on a mission. Within the thirty-six hours which comprised the whole period between his death and resurrection, we do not feel that such occupation could be agreeable to the condition and laws of his human mind. In the wilderness when the devil had finished his temptation, 'behold, angels came and ministered unto him.' When He was in Gethsemane 'there appeared unto him an angel strengthening him.' We cannot deny that on leaving his body on the cross his human soul may have received strength and vigor unknown before; hence we can make no assertion with regard to his probable employment after he gave up the ghost; but we are free to confess that when He said, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit," we do not willingly think of that spirit as being sent away to "preach to the spirits in prison;" we seem to require for Him peaceful and peace-giving ministrations; we do not feel prepared to think of his soul as having at once assumed that giant strength, or that instant oblivion of the cross, that self-possession, or even that perfect calmness, which is implied in his going on such an errand; it does violence to our conceptions of

Him to whose human soul the scenes within the veil would be as strange as they will be to any of us, "his brethren." "The state of seclusion," and the "prison," which Bishop Horsley is obliged to confess represent Hades, were not, to our view, most appropriate to the departing spirit which had just commended itself to the Father's hands. *Hades* as separate from heaven, according to Bishop Horsley and others, is not the abode of the Father; but we seem to require that the beloved Son be taken instantly from amidst the pains of death to the home of his God, and when He said "It is finished," we prefer to think that He was not disappointed by finding another labor awaiting Him, namely, to visit "Hades" and preach to "spirits in prison."

Some of the writers already quoted, who resist the idea that the Saviour spent the interval between death and the resurrection elsewhere than in a place called Hades, argue that he did not go to heaven, from the fact that he told Mary Magdalene He had not ascended to his Father.—The exact words should here be borne in mind: "Touch me not, for I am not yet ascended to my Father."

But we fail to make any good sense of the passage with this interpretation. "Touch me not," said He, "for I am not yet ascended to my Father." Why is this a reason for not touching Him? It would rather seem to be a reason for allowing it, seeing that the sanctity of a glorified state had not yet supervened. The common interpretation is more natural: 'Do not stay now for

these acts of love. I am not ascending at present to heaven; there will be time to meet with me again; go, tell my brethren that I am risen, and that I am to ascend, no more a man of sorrows, but to reign.' 'Touch me not,' — the expression intimates earnestness, and the manner of one who is speeding another on an errand. The rapturous tidings of which Mary was to be the bearer must not be kept one instant from the brethren.

We come now to the passage which is the source of all this error as to the alleged descent of Christ into a place called 'Hades;' and we maintain the common opinion of those who declare that the passage does not give the slightest countenance to the idea of Christ's personal preaching to the "spirits in prison," at his death, nor at any other time. What reason there is for supposing that Christ performed this service just after his death, rather than at any other period, does not appear. Purgatory alone makes it important that it should have been at that time. But we have no belief that he ever did it, nor that there ever were any righteous souls who needed it.

John Howe furnishes us with the interpretation of this passage most commonly received by Protestants. The passage is this: "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God; being put to death in the flesh, but quickened in the spirit; by which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison, when once the long

suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing.”

Mr. Howe says, “While Noah, that preacher of righteousness, was doing it externally, Christ was by his Spirit, inwardly, preaching to the generation who were now secure in the infernal prison; not while they were so, that is in prison, which the text says not, but in their former days of disobedience on earth.”¹

There are few passages which contain so many ideas, crowded so closely together. Here it is difficult to see the chain of association which connects them. The following paraphrase may throw light upon the passage, with its context:

I have been exhorting you to *suffer for righteousness’ sake*, if men persecute you, and not to be *afraid of their terror, neither be troubled*. But honor the Lord God, by keeping the fear of Him uppermost in your hearts, and be ready to explain and maintain the truth. To encourage you in suffering for the truth’s sake, and in meeting with great opposition, and with ill success, I present you with these considerations: 1. ‘Christ suffered for us,’ to “bring us to God;” be willing to suffer, that you may win others. 2. Christ was, indeed, “put to death” by wicked men; but did not the Holy Spirit raise Him to life, and endue Him afresh with power? Be not afraid, then, even to die for the truth. 3. Christ will be with you when you plead with men. Remember Noah. While he preached, Christ by his

¹ Living Temple, II. 10.

spirit helped him. He will help you. 4. Think of those lost souls to whom Noah thus preached, now in prison. Have compassion; be not afraid of the wicked; understand their end. 5. Few and feeble as you are, God will save you. He remembered Noah and saved him and seven others only, in that universal deluge. He remembers and saves his people, even if they be but few. 6. Your Christian profession, if sincere, will save you as really as the ark saved Noah. To be baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, is, to one who lives conformably to that glorious covenant, an ark of salvation. I do not mean that the rite will save you; yet the rite, with all its conditions fulfilled, is as truly an exponent of salvation, as the ark was of deliverance to Noah and his house. 7. This salvation is sure. Christ is risen, nay, 'gone into heaven, at the right hand of God, angels, authorities and powers being made subject unto him.'

If there be any thing utterly foreign from this whole passage, and from the writer's mind, we are disposed to think it was, *a place*, '*Hades*,' and the Saviour's visit to any such place.

But where do Bishop Horsley and others place "Hades?" They speak of it as a "subterranean region," a place "under the earth." The expression "under the earth" was well enough in the days of the Ptolemaic System of Astronomy. The Bible falls in with the popular mode of speaking; but we ask those who would render its astronomical and geological

phrases literally, as the believers in the place Hades must necessarily do, what is meant by the expression, *under the earth*, in connection with a planet which turns wholly round upon its axis every twenty-four hours?

We maintain, therefore, that the idea of the Saviour's going to a place called Hades, and preaching to the souls of the dead, has no countenance from this passage, but that the "spirits in prison," mentioned here, are the souls of the wicked who perished in the flood, to whom Christ through the Spirit preached by Noah; and that they, and their faithful minister of righteousness, and the divine aid afforded him, and his safety and deliverance in the flood, and the sure destruction of the ungodly, are used to encourage Christians now to be faithful and zealous, and to maintain their Christian profession;—all which if they do, their salvation is as sure as was that of Noah, while the destruction of their wicked opposers is as certain as that of sinners in Noah's time who are now in the prison of hell.

But now, What is the true meaning of Hades in the Bible? Is it a *place*, or merely a *state*?

We find no evidence of its being a place. Its meaning, we have already shown, is, *invisibility, the unseen state*.—But are not men said in the Bible to go to Hades? Yes, and in the same sense that they are now said to go into obscurity, or matrimony, or insolvency. Suppose, now, that one should speak of *insolvency* as a place, having two compartments, one for honest debtors, and the other for the dishonest?—or

represent *obscurity*, or *notoriety*, as a place, with upper and lower regions;—he would do very much the same as those who speak of *Hades* as a place. It was the universal practice of the Jews, and of other nations, to speak of the dead as having gone into *the unseen state*, just as we, without distinguishing between good and bad, speak of the dying as going into *the world of spirits*, *the separate state*, *the land of silence*, *the region of the dead*. Such is “Hades.” It is *the invisible state*. God is there; Christ is there; all souls are there; it is *invisibility to us the living*. The Oriental mind pictured this invisible state as a local habitation; it is generally spoken of as such; but we are constantly in the habit of doing the same thing. In our phraseology, we place the body and the soul together in the grave. We speak of a friend as ‘sleeping in Mount Auburn Cemetery.’ Mrs. Hemans, in her ‘Graves of a Household,’ says:

“The sea, the blue, lone sea, hath one;
He lies where pearls lie deep.”—

We are led, therefore, by our views of the Scripture in its direct and indirect allusions to this subject, to the belief that, at death, the souls of the righteous enter heaven, and the souls of the wicked depart to their final abode. But neither are we to suppose that the righteous are in the complete possession of all the means of happiness, nor that the wicked receive the full measure of their punishment, till the resurrection and last judg-

ment. The glorified body will, of course, add to the means of enjoyment in the spiritual world, that body being like that of Christ, connecting the soul more immediately and intimately with the material universe, and bestowing upon it a consciousness of redoubled excellence in the scale of creation. Moreover, to those who followed their Lord and Master here, the final results of their good influence will be to their praise, and honor, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ. As to the wicked (for "there shall be a resurrection both of the just and of the unjust"), the addition of the body which was the instrument of sin, will be an instrument of retribution; "that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." President Edwards says, — "Union with a body is the most rational state of perfection of the human soul. — This was the condition in which the human soul was created at first; — its separation from the body was an alteration brought on by sin; — whence we must conclude that the former state of union to the body was a better state than disunion, which was threatened. It introduced that death that consists in the separation of body and soul. The state of innocency was embodied, the state of guilt was disembodied."¹ Hence the Apostle does not regard our condition as complete till after the resurrection. "We ourselves," he says, "which have the first fruits of the spirit, — groan within ourselves, waiting for

¹ Vol. VII. p. 240.

the adoption,—to wit, the redemption of our body.” “Which,” says John Howe, “though it ultimately refer to the resurrection, may be allowed to have an incomplete meaning in reference to death too, for I see not but, ‘*redemption of our body*,’ may admit such a construction as *redemption of the transgressions*, Heb. ix. 15; that is, that ‘redemption of the body’ may mean redemption from it, wherein it is burdensome, a grievance and penalty, here, as well as there.—Our blessedness is not perfect till mortality be swallowed up of life.”¹

The thought of heaven as now destitute of redeemed souls, except Enoch and Elijah, is not in accordance with our general Christian faith and hope; it does violence to the ordinary conceptions which good people have respecting departed Christian friends; it falsifies their use of the word “heaven” in connection with them. The wonder is, if the *place Hades* theory be true, that we have not learned to speak of our dying Christian friends as “going to Hades,” nay as going to “hell;” for according to “the Apostles’ Creed,” Christ “descended into hell,” and (as Bishop Horsley and others say), to carry good news to the pious dead. The Christian use of the word *heaven*, rather than any substitute, in connection with departed saints, points to the deep-seated belief which the Bible has wrought in the hearts of men that “the souls of believers are at their death made perfect in holiness and do immediately

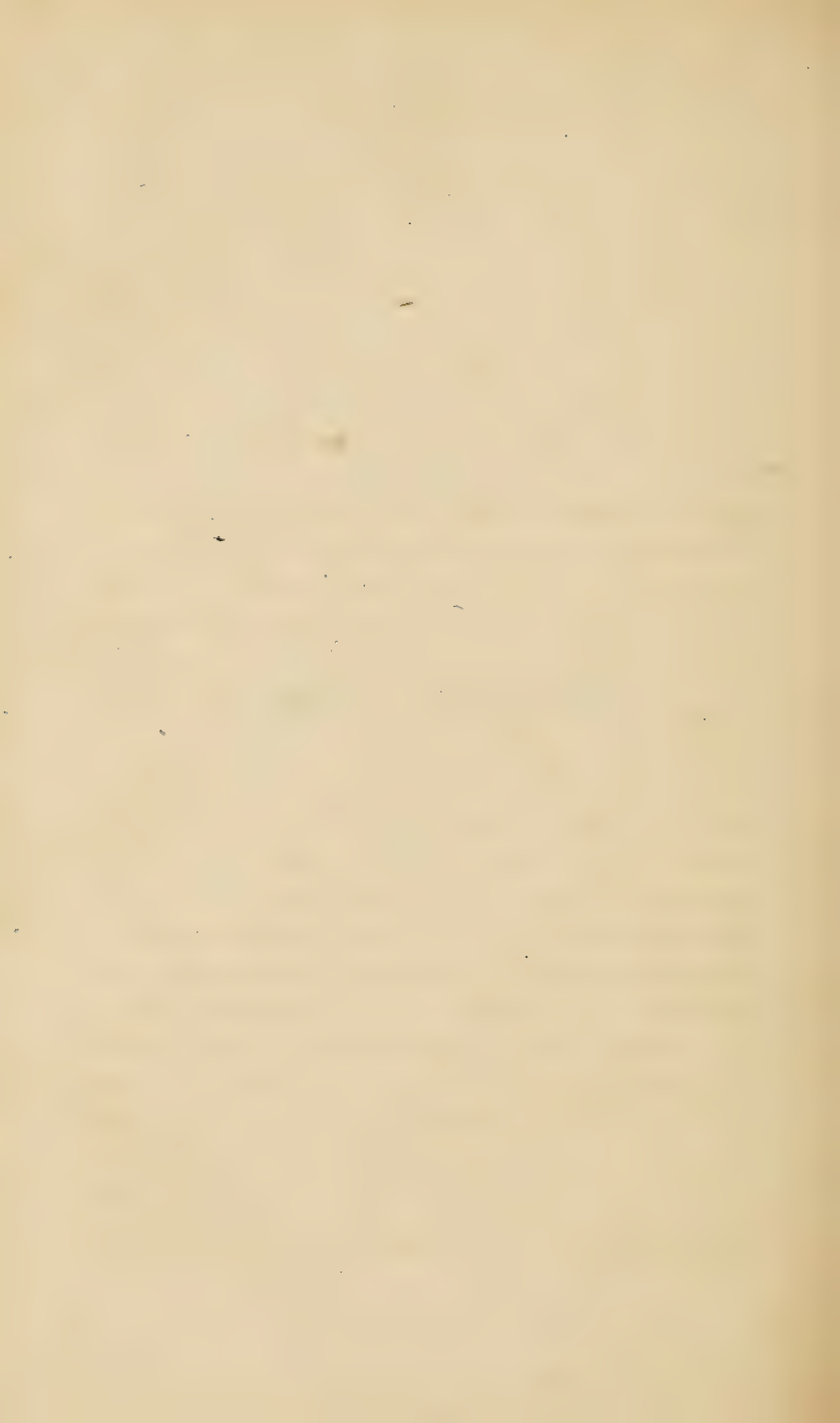
¹ Sermon: “Desire of being absent from the body, and present with the Lord.” I. 1028.

pass into glory." With the respect which is due to distinguished names in the Christian church, let us be grateful if we find ourselves free from those views of Scripture which indicate the lingering influence of Roman Catholic superstition, to which we perceive good men are subject who nevertheless abjure all affinity with Rome. True, our sympathies, and our longings, with reference to a future state, are not our guide; but we repose in the full assurance that the Bible, interpreted on principles untainted by Romish inventions, establishes the belief, in which we are joined by a goodly fellowship in the Episcopal communion (from some of whose excellent men, and from others in our own denomination, we are obliged to differ on this subject), that the thanksgiving in the burial service of the Episcopal Church is, with some exceptions, the secret voice of all souls who take the word of God for their infallible guide. Therefore, in the language of that act of adoration, as a sign of love and concord, in the prospect of heaven, nearer every day, and in communion with our pious dead, we will join in thanksgiving to "ALMIGHTY GOD, WITH WHOM DO LIVE THE SPIRITS OF THOSE WHO DEPART HENCE IN THE LORD, AND WITH WHOM THE SOULS OF THE FAITHFUL, AFTER THEY ARE DELIVERED FROM THE BURDEN OF THE FLESH, ARE IN JOY AND FELICITY."



XVII.

RETRIBUTION.



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THE doctrine of Endless Retribution, if stated in the identical language of Christ and the Apostles, is liable to no greater objections than we would all probably have made against the present constitution of things, had it been submitted beforehand for our approval.

Ages of woe by reason of crimes, death in its unnumbered forms, successive generations of evil doers unreclaimed by the history of their predecessors, the appalling number of divine judgments with which it would be needful to punish sinners, the history of wars, famines, pestilences, of public and private mourning, and the sum total of sorrow in all its forms, under the government of One who could prevent it if He chose, and who would, one day, cause it to cease, not because the system had worn itself out, but because it will have accomplished his purposes, constitute a dispensation such as we would all have declared beforehand a benevolent God would never permit. But we might be told that, however long and fearful this reign of terror, the result would justify all that suffering. We should still doubt

the benevolence, or the wisdom, or the power of God, who could not, or would not, accomplish his purposes except by the groans and blood of his children. There is nothing in the endless punishment of a portion of the race more truly liable to objection than such a system would be to a benevolent being, who should have been consulted with regard to its antecedent probability.

Nor can we find in our hearts any objections to the endless punishment of the wicked as inconsistent with the paternal character of God, which might not lie against the treatment which our first parents received from God upon their first transgression. This has been suggested already, under another doctrine. But let us again suppose that children have flagrantly disobeyed a father, that the father pronounces his curse upon them; that he turns them out of the dwelling which they had received from him at their marriage; armed guards are stationed to prevent their return; he follows them with his curse, imposing hard labor upon them, causing the very soil which they till to be a plague to them, visiting them with sickness, greatly multiplying their sorrows in the birth of their offspring, and finally causing them to die. And all this for their first offence! He does not give them a second trial; they sinned but once; they had before been perfect in their obedience, but for one transgression they are visited with inexorable displeasure. 'But it is for their ultimate happiness; and the welfare of the majority of those who are to descend from them will be promoted by it.' The apology would

not be regarded. The 'paternal character' of such a man would be a by-word.

Worse things, if possible, have been spoken and written against the atonement by Christ, than against the doctrine of the endless punishment of the wicked. The thought that those who may be punished forever might have chosen a different course, allays the natural feelings of some who would otherwise persistently oppose the doctrine. But for a God of infinite love to put his own Son to death on the cross before He can forgive sin, presents the Most High before the minds of some in a light so revolting, that no pictures of future woe inflicted by Him on transgressors can go beyond it.

When men come to feel the guilt of sin as committed by themselves against such a Being as God, and then receive his testimony respecting the appointed way of pardon, we find them as enthusiastic in their love and praise as before they were bitter in their denunciations. With an increase of spiritual knowledge, darkness is turned to light, the crooked is made straight, and the rough places in the divine administration become plain. So when we look at the apostasy, and the history of sin in our world, in connection with the history of redemption, we are very far from impugning the wisdom or the benevolence of God. Hence, let it be declared that God will punish the wicked forever, inflicting upon them all which the terrible language of the Bible, literally interpreted, conveys, and it will come to pass that when we know more of God, and of the

interests of the divine government, we shall have feelings not unlike those which are excited when, in view of the cross of Christ and the history of sin and redemption thus far, we cry, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!"

Using the arguments commonly employed to disprove the doctrine of the endless punishment of the wicked, I propose to show that the men of Noah's time could, with equal conclusiveness, have proved that there would be no deluge. Indeed, it can, in the same way and with equal conclusiveness be shown, that there was no such deluge.

We will, first of all, quote the language by which it was attempted to show that there would be a deluge. The following will suffice for this purpose. Though familiar to the reader, it may be well for him to note some of the strong expressions in these verses:

"And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me, —and behold I will destroy them with the earth. — Make thee an ark. And behold I, even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth to destroy all flesh wherein is the breath of life from under heaven, and every thing that is on the earth shall die. But with thee will I establish my covenant, and thou shalt come into the ark, thou, and thy sons, and thy wife, and thy sons' wives with thee."

"And the flood was forty days upon the earth; — and the waters prevailed exceedingly upon the earth,

and all the high hills that were under the whole heaven were covered. — And all flesh died that moved upon the earth, — and all in whose nostrils was the breath of life, of all that was in the dry land died. — And every living substance was destroyed which was upon the face of the ground, both man, and cattle, and the creeping things, and the fowl of the heaven; and they were destroyed from the earth; and Noah only remained alive, and they that were with him in the ark.”

The following passages, among others, are thought to be confirmatory of the foregoing:

“For as in the days that were before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and knew not till the flood came and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.”

“—— The spirits in prison, which some time were disobedient when once the long suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water.” “For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished.”

We may surely apply to these passages the words of John Foster, when he had quoted the terrific language of the New Testament respecting endless punishment: “It must be admitted that these passages are formidably strong; so strong that it must be an argu-

ment of extreme cogency that would authorize a limited interpretation."

But if the common arguments against endless punishment have any weight, it will be easy to raise objections to the common belief that there was a deluge such as these passages, literally interpreted, seem to describe. We admit their authenticity, but they are capable, we will assume, of a different interpretation.

For, we might say, First, The paternal character of God makes it impossible that he should destroy the whole human family (except eight) by a deluge.

Think of pictures in the windows of the shops, and on the walls of parlors, representing a father destroying his whole large family except a small remnant. People would not endure the sight.

Consider what the population of the earth must have been in those days. We can form some estimate with regard to it when we recollect that the population of the United States in 1850, two hundred and thirty years after the landing at Plymouth, was twenty-three millions. Leaving out of view the increase here, by immigration, we see that, in sixteen hundred years from Adam to Noah, and taking into view the great length of life in those days, the population must have been exceedingly great. If the increase were only the same as that of the Israelites in Egypt, six hundred thousand footmen, besides women and children, in four hundred years, from seventy souls, or if it were such as the multiplication of the Israelites must have

been in the wilderness and in Canaan, judging from the number of their warriors, the habitable parts of the earth must have been filled with people in Noah's day.

But of this vast family "a few," that is, eight souls only, are said to have been saved.

We may allude to the indiscriminateness of the destruction, no allowance being made for shades of character and degrees of guilt. The youth and the hoary transgressor die side by side. No imagination can picture such a catastrophe. Yet it is said God was the author of this destruction. He not only looked on, but He himself did it. Is He a Father?

Secondly, It might be alleged, The disproportionateness of the sin to the punishment is an argument against the flood.

A youth, and even a child (not to speak of the infants), who might have lived to the age of Methuselah, is, for sins committed in his most thoughtless moments, deprived of his eight or nine hundred years of life on earth. Where is the justice of this? John Foster says that if we could divide infinite duration by the number of sins committed by one individual, it would give millions of ages for each sin. We have an amount of punishment in the loss of life and happiness by the flood for each sin committed in childhood, which is as really disproportioned, if one chooses to think so, as are the punishments of eternity. If you say the suffering in one case is infinite, and in the other finite, the reply is,

excessive damages need not be infinite to create a revulsion of feeling in favor of the defendant, nor to constitute injustice.

Thirdly, We might argue, Fair warning could not justify the infliction.

It is said that the ante-diluvians had full notice of their approaching destruction.—But some may reply, ‘if the threatening was contrary to common sense, they could not believe, and they were not to blame. The only effect of Noah’s preaching was to harden the heart, in the same way that the obnoxious doctrines of evangelical religion are now said to make men infidels. Noah convinced only his own house, and them, probably, through his influence as a father, or by the partiality of God, who withheld saving grace from all but them. Even the carpenters employed upon the ark were not convinced;—a solemn warning to all who preach terror. Men cannot be frightened into religion. Love is the only appeal which can be successfully addressed to the human heart.’

Fourthly, It could be urged, The goodness of God experienced by the people of Noah’s time confuted the idea of a flood. Seasons and fruits, the early and the latter rain, spoke of the Maker’s goodness. The bow in the cloud, it is argued, must, by the laws of light, have existed as soon as there were falling drops of water, and therefore that it was seen from the beginning—not created as a sign, but adopted, for the purpose. So that this meteor, born of water, must have made all

men feel that the God who painted that beautiful object upon water, and most commonly upon the receding storm, never could use the element of water to destroy all the human family but eight. As birds and flowers are now a conclusive argument with some against endless retributions, the bow in the cloud was no doubt a demonstration that God would not destroy birds, and beasts, and men, with a cruel, vindictive infliction. Noah must have seemed a most melancholy, pitiable character. The paternal character of God must have perished from his thoughts. Surely he could not say, much less teach mankind to say, 'Our Father which art in heaven.' — But it could also be said here, as it has been said with respect to future retribution, —

Fifthly, Noah himself could not have believed his own doctrine, or he would have been insane.

John Foster tells us that the professed believers in endless punishment do not and cannot really believe it. If they did, he says they would be continually uttering cries of entreaty in the ears of men; they would not eat nor sleep, by reason of their solicitude for their fellow creatures, and many would lose their reason on account of it.

Now as Noah did not become a maniac under the influence of the impending judgment which he preached, he could not have believed it. If belief of future retributions in another world must make believers in them beside themselves, much more the sure coming of a deluge with all its visible horrors, must, if fully antici-

pated by Noah, have rendered him utterly incapable of long-continued intelligent acts. It is said that he preached for a hundred and twenty years upon this subject, and without success. His failure from year to year to win souls from destruction, must have destroyed the balance of his mind, and therefore the narration is inadmissible.

Sixthly, The doctrine of the deluge could easily have been shown to be inconsistent with other divine teachings.

God had mercy even upon our first parents, treated them with clemency in some things, and promised them a Redeemer. Witness, too, his treatment of Cain. He shelters the murderer of a brother against the instinctive desire of men for retributive justice. Lamech, the manslayer, takes courage from this, and tells his wives that if God showed this sevenfold goodness to Cain, Lamech should experience it seventy and seven fold. The ante-diluvians might have said, We are surely no worse than Cain.

Seventhly, The plain declarations of God concerning the deluge are easily explained, on the Universalist principles of interpretation, to signify exactly the opposite of that which is commonly held to be their meaning.

It may be said, Look below the surface of language. Make great allowance for Oriental exaggeration. Do we suppose that a whole system of theology was intended to be conveyed by the first seven chapters of Genesis?

Are they not "word-pictures?" Is not the whole narrative a mere 'pictorial epic,' to convey some moral truth by flaming colors? Take the words literally, and, of course, they prove the deluge. But let us examine them philosophically. Doing this, it is easy to show that the deluge means, A great moral reformation in the time of Noah.

All men, it seems, were to "die." "And all flesh died." Yes, They "died unto sin and lived unto righteousness." Paul says, "Sin reviled, and I died." He means that he gave up his self-righteousness and became a Christian. Thus, all sin died, for a time; "all *flesh* died;" flesh means sin; "that which is born of the flesh is *flesh*," i. e. sinful. 'If ye live after the *flesh*, ye shall die.' This cannot be gainsayed. Now the flood was undoubtedly a flood of tears, godly sorrow, a universal weeping on account of sin. This was produced by the sight of God's goodness in providing the ark. For what is the meaning of "ark"? Read in Moses; an ark, there, is a depository of sacred emblems. Noah's ark was a chapel, a sanctuary for him and his family; and connected with it was a place for the representations of the innocent animal creation, a menagerie, by means of which, in that sacred place, God would teach man his wisdom and benevolence. This touching act of divine goodness in showing his regard for virtue by bestowing favor on Noah and his house, and by calling on men to look upon the creatures which God had made, had an immediate effect upon man. A

flood of tears was the consequence. "The highest mountains were covered," that is, mountains of transgression; for our sins are said to reach up to heaven. Thus, in the bold, oriental style, there was a deluge of repentance, flooding the great wickedness of men.

But "every thing in whose nostrils was the breath of life, died." That is, The animals experienced a great change in their dispositions, in sympathy with the change in man, who would now treat the brute creatures with kindness, and so win their love. As to the rest of the story about the "dove," and the "olive-leaf," are they any thing more than "scenic pictures," to finish out the tale? We find similar things in the "Arabian Nights," the Koran, Ossian, Hafiz, and in Origen.

If one should think that these arguments are caricatures, let him peruse the following piece of biblical interpretation, written and published not long since, by a clerical editor, under his own name:

"Judas uttered the strongest dying testimony of the purity of Jesus, and gave practical proof of the sincerity of his repentance, by throwing down the price of his perfidy at the feet of his seducers; and either they or he purchased with it a field, in the midst of which he 'fell asunder and all his bowels gushed out'—or, his heart broke, as the word bowels is sometimes used in Scripture. With this agrees a fair rendering of Matthew xxvii: 5, reading, instead of 'hanged himself,' *choked with anguish*—both implying the death of Judas

by internal rupture from excessive anguish on account of his sin. His repentance was as real as that of the thief on the cross.—‘Good were it for that man if he had not been born’—i. e. living to manhood would hardly be desirable.”

Had Judas been the subject of this lecture instead of the deluge, and its interpretations had been used to illustrate the testimony of Scripture concerning Judas, they would have struck the reader as an attempt at caricaturing the opinions and arguments of others.

That the Bible makes the impression on the world at large that the punishment of the wicked after death will be endless, is manifest from this, that, notwithstanding it is repulsive to the natural feelings, and that, in cases of bereavement, there is the strongest possible inducement to interpret the Bible favorably to their wishes, the great majority of the devout everywhere accept the doctrine; they preach it, they hear it, they admit that the Bible teaches it, while every private feeling and motive would incline them to believe otherwise. They have no unworthy reasons for believing it; they are not credulous, superstitious, priest-ridden; they are biblical scholars; they are men in whom the community confide, they are kind, benevolent, gentle; they are as jealous for the character of God as others, and as able to appreciate the reflections which some think the doctrine seems to cast upon his goodness. But they have adopted the principle of implicit faith in the teachings of the Bible when fairly interpreted. They reject the prin-

ciple that we are to believe no further than we can understand, or that our moral sentiments and our instincts are the supreme test of truth.

The belief that the Bible teaches this doctrine has received valuable aid of late in the unequivocal testimony of Rev. Theodore Parker, which, though published before, will be quoted here for the information of any who have not seen it, and who might, for some reasons, be interested in it. In a note to the writer, kindly replying to an inquiry, he says (Dec. 1, 1858 — the italics are his):

“*To me it is quite clear that Jesus taught the doctrine of eternal damnation, if the Evangelists — the first three I mean — are to be treated as inspired. I can understand his language in no other way. But as the Protestant sects start with the notion — which to me is a monstrous one — that the words of the New Testament are all miraculously inspired of God, and so infallibly true; and as the doctrine of eternal damnation is so revolting to all the humane and moral feelings of our nature, men said the words must be interpreted in another way. So as the Unitarians have misinterpreted the New Testament to prove that the *Christos* of the fourth Gospel had no præexistence, the Universalists misinterpreted passages of the Gospels to show that Jesus of Nazareth never taught eternal damnation. So the geologists misinterpret Genesis to-day — to save the infallible character of the text.*”

An expedient to remove the insupportable burden

with which the doctrine of endless retribution frequently weighs upon the human heart, has been revived of late in the theory of the 'Annihilation of the Wicked.'

One great error of interpretation lies at the foundation of that theory, and extends its influence into all the reasoning of its advocates. They say that, in the Bible, "life" is everywhere declared to be the inheritance of the good, alone; while "death" is, with the same uniformity, pronounced to be the fate of the wicked. "Life" and "death" they hold to mean, respectively, existence, and non-existence. Grant them this, and their conclusions are plausible.

But in the Scriptures, "life," as a promise to the good, does not mean *existence*, but that which makes existence a blessing. Nor does "death," as a threatening, mean the loss of being, but of that which makes it desirable to exist. Hence when it is said, "To them who, by patient continuance in well doing, seek for glory, honor, and immortality, *eternal life*," we hold the meaning to be, that their existence shall find its great design in perfect, endless felicity; and when it is said, "The wages of sin is death," the meaning is, existence shall be a perpetual loss of every thing which makes it good to live, the soul surviving to endure this loss and to feel its bitter consequences, forever. The advocate of annihilation denies this, and insists upon the mere literal, popular meaning of the words "life" and "death."

We must insist, in turn, that the extent of meaning,

in the two cases, be made the same ; but this would at once destroy the theory of annihilation, by making the happiness of the blessed to consist only in bare existence, which is unscriptural and absurd. For, does "death" mean *ceasing to be*, and that only? Then "life" means *continuing to be*, and that only. Who will assert this? Existence of itself is not a blessing. But is this all that the glowing language of the Bible, with its accumulation of metaphors, means, when it promises "eternal life" to the good? It surely must be interpreted so as to mean nothing but *existence*, if the second "death" means only non-existence.

What does Christ mean when he says, "A man's *life* consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesses"? Not *existence*, surely, but that which makes existence happy. "It is for thy *life*," says the wise man with regard to instruction. "The way of life," "the fountain of life," "findeth life," "wisdom giveth life," and many such passages, do not mean bare existence; no one supposes this to be their signification. The word *Zoe* (life), among the Greeks, was synonymous with possessions, one's entire sources of prosperity and enjoyment. The hearers of Christ did not need to be told that a man's *existence* (*Zoe*) consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth; but they, like others, were prone to feel that the end of life is to be rich, and they needed admonition.

The way in which immortality is referred to in the Scriptures will illustrate our position. It is represented

as something which we do not yet possess; for the good are said to “seek for immortality.” And besides, it is not *living forever* which Christians now seek for. But they possess immortality now, if ever; hence the “immortality,” in this passage, does not signify merely *continued existence*. Notice the antithesis to “immortality” in this verse:—“indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish.” Mere existence, then, is not the main idea in this promised immortality.

The Greek word *immortality* (*aphtharsia*) is sometimes, and in other connections, rendered *sincerity*, *incorruption*,—which gives us a fine idea of the inherent beauty and power of the word when applied to the future existence of the good, and it wonderfully confirms the position that, in the Bible, existence in itself is not regarded as the primary blessing, but the moral state which makes it a good thing.

In the lecture on the “Intermediate State” it was observed that Dr. Priestley declared materialism and Socinianism to be inseparable. Great use is made of the signification which believers in annihilation give to *death* in the Bible, to destroy the doctrine of our Saviour’s Godhead. For if when Christ *died*, He became unconscious, and remained so while in the tomb, there could be no divine nature in his person, else, they say, He could not have *died*. The inference is plain. All annihilationists are not Socinians; but their theory would lead them, logically, to that error.

It is interesting to notice how the Scriptures strictly

observe the rule of describing things according to appearance, and in the use of popular language, even in speaking of the righteous and the wicked. By this mode of expression, it has already been observed, the language of the Scriptures never conflicts with discoveries in astronomy and geology; but the advocates of annihilation, forgetting this law of language, make great use of certain declarations respecting the wicked. One illustration will suffice: "Yet a little while and the wicked shall not be." This is triumphantly used to prove that the wicked are annihilated when they die. But similar expressions are used concerning the good: "And Enoch walked with God, *and he was not*, for God took him." More exactly corresponding to the expression first quoted, we hear even Job say: "Thou shalt seek me in the morning, and I shall *not be*."

It will not be necessary, nor is there room here, to follow the annihilationist in all his extremely literal interpretations of words and phrases relating to life, death, and a future state. The foregoing exposition of the principles on which he interprets the word of God is sufficient. He tells us, in reply to our correction of his error, as we consider it, that the Bible is unintelligible to the common people on the theory of interpretation which we hold. We reply that the Bible follows the ordinary laws of human speech, in every land and tongue; but if men interpreted the language of ordinary life as the annihilationist renders the Bible, conversation would soon become a Babel, and human affairs

would be hopelessly perplexed. Take the two words which we have now considered, as used with reference to this world. We speak of the 'pious dead,' 'the sainted dead.' Do we mean, The unconscious? When a community is said to be "dead," or when active Christians are said to be "alive," common people know that *death* and *life* are symbols of certain conditions. So in the Bible.

In arguing with the annihilationist, we do not gain much by insisting on the indestructibility of the soul. For surely God can destroy that which His hands have made. The proofs of endless retribution are better drawn from other sources. Unanswerable proofs of the existence of spiritual beings, are far better than all the arguments against materialism.

The use which the advocate of annihilation makes of the prominence given in the Scriptures to the resurrection, as the date of perfected reward and punishment, has been noticed in the previous lecture, when replying to Bishop Horsley's arguments. The intermediate state, let us never forget, much less deny, is a state of expectation, and, compared with the scenes and experiences of the last day, no doubt it is such that to speak of that last day as a waking from sleep, coming to life, and other bold metaphors, are surely as correct as it is for a man who has been recovered from a mistake, or who meets with a wonderful discovery, to say that he 'awoke from a dream,' that he was 'in a new world.' Without dwelling on this point, already dis-

cussed, we pass to another line of argument against the doctrine of annihilation.

An effective consideration against this doctrine of annihilation is, that it is utterly inconsistent with the sublime plan which is evidently implied in the atonement. That scheme implies the great principle of human accountability; it appears to be made for the twofold purpose of maintaining the interests of law, and as the greatest possible motive to influence the human will. The atonement consists in the most stupendous acts of which the divine nature is capable, namely, The union of the Divine Word with the body and soul of the Redeemer, in connection with the accursed death of the cross. The impression thus made is, that the peril of man is infinite, the price at which he is to be redeemed, infinite; and the consequences infinite, if the atonement be refused. God was willing to offer up his only begotten and well-beloved Son; it was a sacrifice, in every sense; it was equivalent to the penalty incurred by all men, else it was not an adequate atonement. This, God has done to save men; and now, if upon their rejection of his efforts in their behalf, He feels compelled to blot them out of existence, — He abandons the great principle of human responsibility, which it cost so much to vindicate, and He substitutes for it the extinction of being. This is a confession of weakness; the great plan is not carried out; it began with infinite majesty, deriving its greatness very much from the principle of human responsibility which it main-

tained, inasmuch as it declared that no sinner should be saved except through his acceptance of the atonement made by his incarnate God. We need something at the end of the scheme to balance the amazing greatness of its beginning. To put persons out of existence is not correlative to the Son of God becoming incarnate and dying for them. As much as the human mind dreads the idea of endless misery, let it be considered whether the atonement does not seem to make it necessary, so that the consequences of rejecting it may readily be seen to be as great as the effort to save. A disbeliever in the atonement, we can conceive, may more readily believe in annihilation; one who has unworthy views of the principle of human responsibility, resolving all into divine efficiency, may not find it difficult to believe that God will blot out the wicked from existence; but, in view of the atonement by our incarnate God, no one can believe that the incorrigibly wicked will be annihilated without seeming to admit that the stupendous scheme, in the first place, was disproportionate, and, in the second place, that as to its rejectors it came to nothing. There must be an endless death to correspond with the endless life, as the issue of the mighty plan, or He who was able to suffer for the wicked acknowledges himself unable to meet the natural consequences of their rejecting Him. We are not to believe this. He who died for men does not ask relief of his creatures through any scheme which annihilates those whom He cannot see enduring the perpetual

consequences, plainly set before them here, of rejecting infinite condescension and love in their behalf. If Christ died for the ungodly, we cannot suppose that they will be suffered to die for themselves. For in that case there would appear to be another way besides the death of Christ in which they could be redeemed from endless misery, that is to say, by putting them forever out of its reach. Thus the atonement is the corner-stone of the divine administration. It makes endless punishment a necessary part of the divine plan; and, in its turn, endless punishment looks to the atonement as its great counterpart, it is the obverse side, in the moral system.

The same principle in men which leads them to believe and advocate annihilation as a relief of the divine character from imputations of cruelty, leads others to teach that future punishment will consist merely in the natural consequences of evil doing, without any positive infliction from the hand of God. They would not admit, however, that future happiness is merely the consequences of well doing; they agree that God will bestow upon the righteous positive acts of goodness, making them drink of "the river of his pleasures." But the passages which confirm this view, and those which represent God as punishing the wicked hereafter, are to be interpreted by the same rule; it is only as the human heart melts with terror at the thought of God as a punisher, that objections are made in the one case which never occur in the other. Sin is not its own punish-

ment. It is not so in this world. Men can become so brutish that if God will but depart from them, He may leave them to the society of one another, however wicked, and they will so adjust themselves to their condition that, in time, they can endure every discomfort, and every form of misery.

If there be no other form in which positive punishments will be inflicted on the wicked, we may infer from the last dread sentence, which consigns them to the society of the devil and his angels, and from the power of evil spirits over men in the time of Christ, that this source of positive suffering will be experienced in addition to the natural consequences of sin. When we read of seven devils in possession of one human victim, we gather that there is malignant pleasure in their making a victim intensely wretched. The poor creature among the tombs, so fierce that no one could pass that way, may be an illustration, designed in infinite mercy, to show us what it is to be the subjects of the devil. His minions, once on thrones in heaven, begged that they might enter into the swine. But not to dwell on this, — let every one who declares it to be too fearful for belief, remember that no one is compelled to endure it. “God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him.”

It is impossible, in the nature of things, for man to be more capable of appreciating arguments and moral obli-

gations, and of shunning risks and securing happiness, than he is in this world. He does not need here to be cast into prison in order to keep the laws; and those who do suffer this penalty are not elevated by it to any superior discernment or to any higher tone of character. If only brutish people were in danger of future misery, the argument in favor of disciplinary influence hereafter would be more plausible; but if it be the educated, the polished, the leaders of society, as well as others who, if they believe not, shall perish, we may insist that never can they more fully discern or feel the obligations of religion than in this world.

It is not to be supposed that the character of God as a punisher will make the wicked any more favorably disposed toward Him than they are in this present life. Here the influences of reconciliation, represented by all that gives a charm to human life, are suited to subdue the heart, and here the character of God, just, and hating sin, is blended with manifestations of infinite love; but if his character, thus presented, fails to subdue and secure the heart, it is unphilosophical to suppose that the execution of the last dread sentence will dispose men to love God. For Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God unto salvation; it is Christ,—not the infliction of the second death.

Some, to vindicate the character of God from the imputation of cruelty, or his government of this world from the charge of being a failure, maintain, in a somewhat apologetic manner, that the number of the lost

cannot possibly be so great as the number of the redeemed, and they think, by placing the future punishment of the wicked within sight of the overwhelming multitudes of the redeemed, to abate the force of objections against it.

Even if the number of the redeemed is to be as great as they claim,—and no human heart can fail to hope, nor can the most rational calculations fail to excite the belief, that the comparative number of the redeemed will be exceedingly great,—the numbers who must already have perished by the judgments of God are too great to be sunk into insignificance by any contrasted numbers of the redeemed; nor can the everlasting misery of such a number be less a reflection upon the goodness and justice of God, if one will so regard it, however many there may be who shall be saved.

We must admit that there are depths in the government of God which we cannot fathom. Surely, there would seem to be enough in the existence of sin and its consequences in this world, to prevent arrogant judgments with regard to things which lie beyond the boundaries of time. The supposition that the present course of things will be wholly reversed, instead of being carried forward to an issue corresponding to the first part of the plan, that the universe is one day to be utterly free from sin and misery, is without foundation, except in the fancies of men. They insist that the endless continuance of sin and misery is a reflection upon the power, or wisdom, or goodness, of God, perhaps upon all

of them together. "But who hath known the mind of the Lord, or, being his counsellor, hath taught Him?" It is as capable of proof as the contrary that the illustrations of the character of God, and of the nature, and effects, and final consequences, of sin, derived from the endless misery of reprobate transgressors, will tend to the infinite happiness of worlds and systems without number, and that, under a government administered through motives and not by force, it may be the wisest and most benevolent plan to let all creation see, in the chosen portion of the wicked forever, what holiness is, and its great rewards, and what sin is, and its consequences.

But we pause with this subject, and at this point, where we look off into darkness, across which no light from reason or from revelation throws its beams. The Bible leaves the unjust, unjust still, and the righteous, righteous still. In doing this, however, "the Spirit and the bride say, Come."

Leaving these great themes here, let the reader find thoughts congenial with his own in these words of Bernard Barton's "Christmas Carol," which also express the plan and aim of the writer in the foregoing presentations of divine truth:

- “Not in subtle speculation,
Not in codes and creeds of men,
Not in learned disputation
On thy Gospel’s hidden plan ;
- “Not in reason’s proud researches,
Fixing thesis, date, or term,
Not in quoting synods, churches,
Dwells religion’s vital germ.
- “Thou who diedst for man’s transgression,
Thou who reignest now above,
Still art heard in intercession,
Still art known by acts of Love ; —
- “Fain would I, with reverent feeling,
Owe my hopes to Thee alone,
To thy Sacrifice appealing
Cast each crown before thy Throne.
- “Trusting human strength no longer,
Henceforth be that weakness mine
Which attempts not to be stronger
In itself, but power divine ; —
- “Which seeks not from depths of science,
Heights of knowledge, aid to draw ;
But in humble, meek reliance
On thy LOVE, would keep thy law.”



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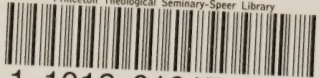
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